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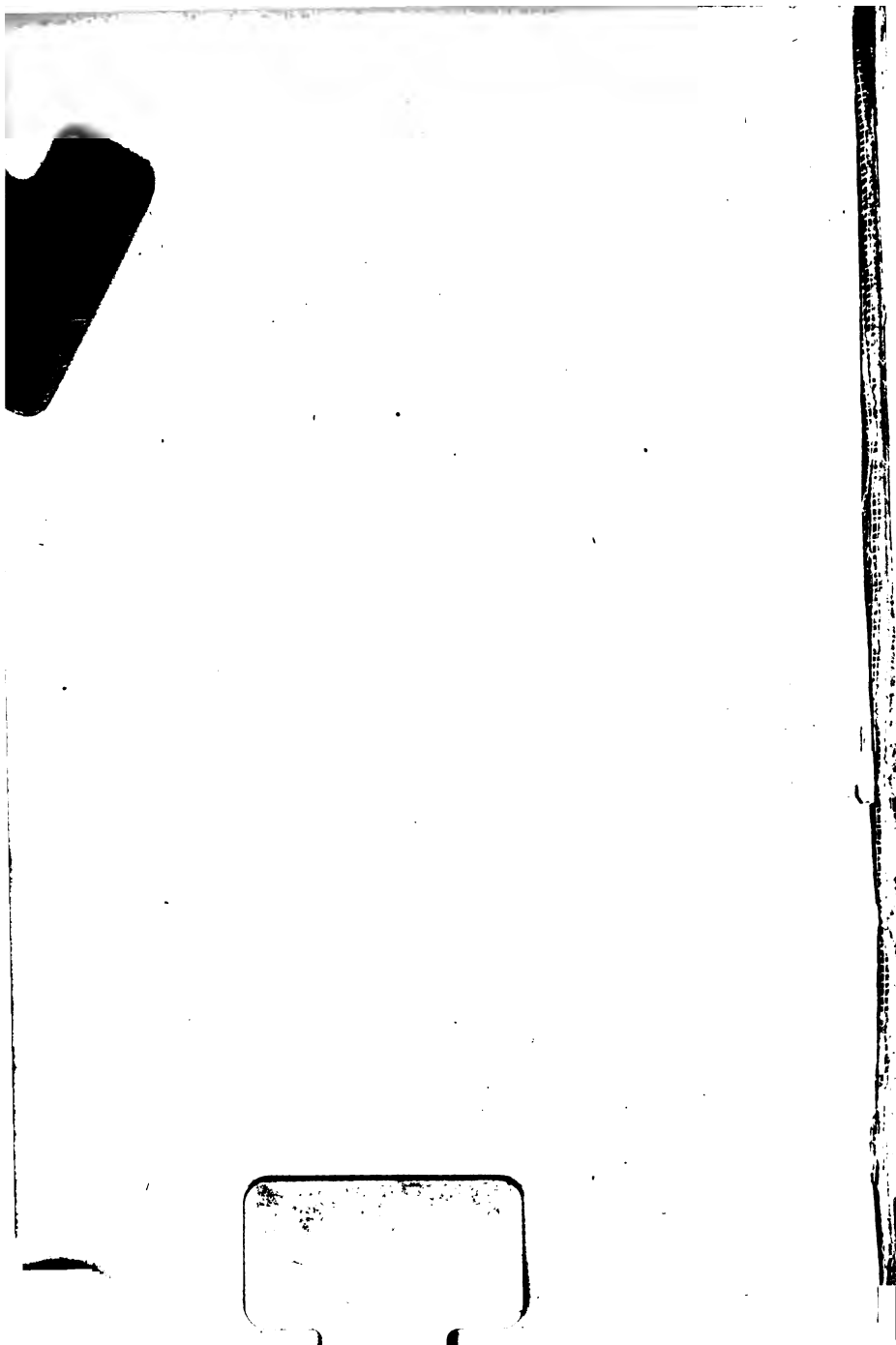
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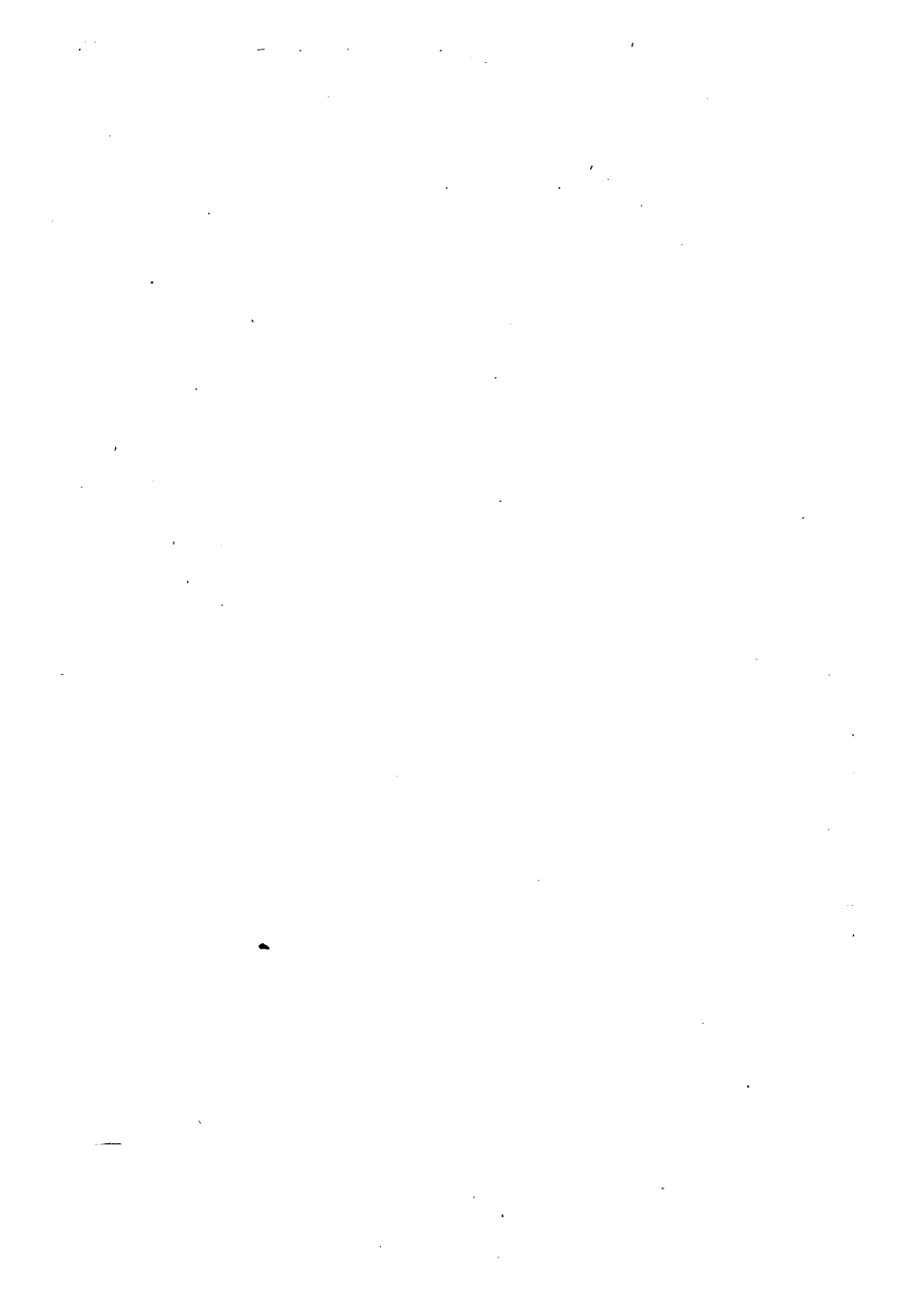
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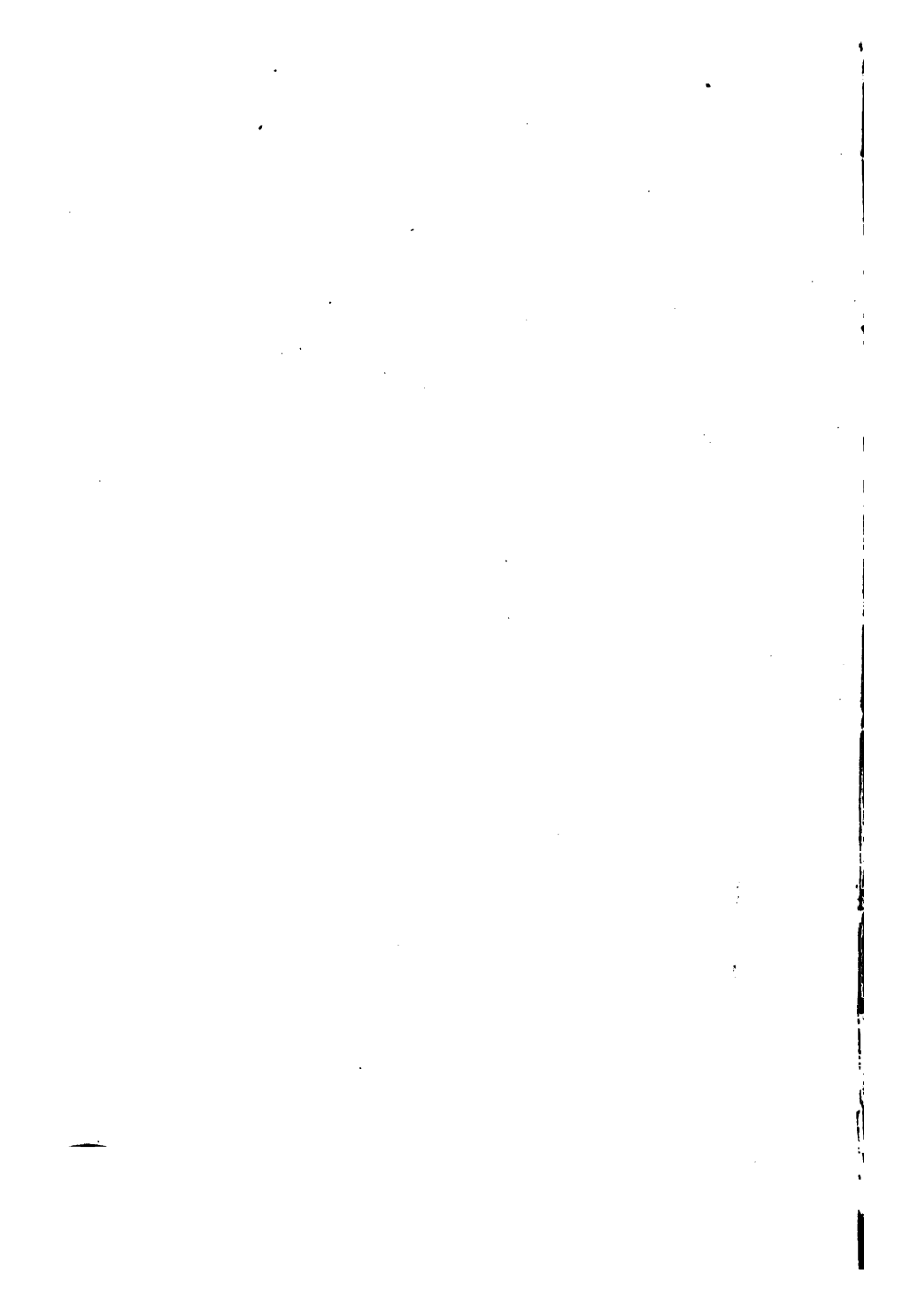


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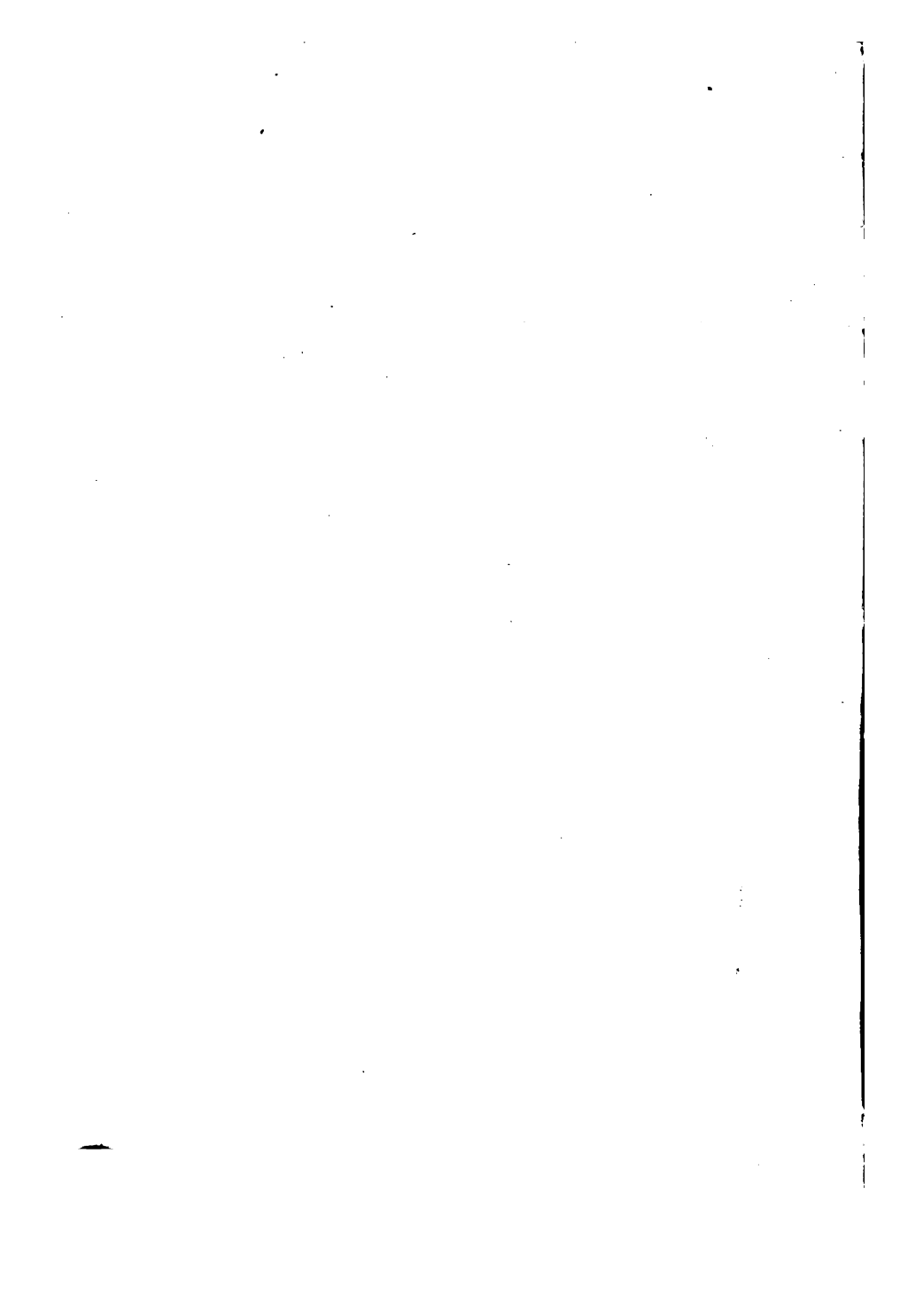
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Frontispiece.

THE CHILDREN OF SUNNYMEADOW.

Not for R.D.
S. J. J. J. J.

THE LITTLE LAME LORD

OR

THE CHILD OF CLOVERLEA

BY

THEODORA C. ELMSLIE

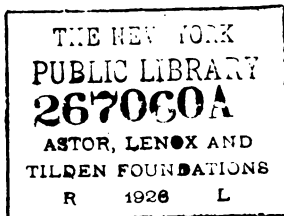
*Author of "Little Lady of Lavender," "Those Midsummer Fairies,"
"The Pilgrim Child"*

"It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself.

—CHARLES DICKENS

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"I'd like a baby doll!" she cried.

CHAPTER I.

WITH CHRISTMAS ANGELS.

"Where did you come from, baby dear?"

"Out of the everywhere into here."

"But how did you come to us, you dear?"

"God thought about you, and so I am here."

GEORGE MACDONALD.

CHRISTMAS EVE; such a Christmas! Snow-crowned, icicle-hung, cold, glittering, dazzlingly beautiful.

The hills of Malvern, robed in purest white,

stood out distinct and clear against the heavy gray sky—those everlasting hills that have witnessed the coming and going of so many Christmastides. Down in the quiet valley of the Severn, the broad, calm river slowly wended its way betwixt frozen fields and snowclad woods. The music of the abbey bells floated dreamily over highland and lowland, singing the song the angels sang of old, the Christmas message of peace. It was a very tranquil scene.

The ferryman at the Ryd breathed hard upon his blue chilled hands, as he waited with what patience he might muster for his next customer.

Away over the river and across the meadows, away and away, far from the busy haunts of men, stood a quaintly-gabled Elizabethan house, called from time immemorial Sunnymeadow Farm. There it nestled, solitary and ancient, amid the sheltering pine-trees and larches, and tall, straight poplars, as out-of-the-world a home as one might find on the countryside.

But at this Christmastide Sunnymeadow was no deserted nest. Lord and Lady Deramore with their children, the four little Ladies Carew, were in residence, and the dark old corridors with their oak panels and ancient portraits of a bygone generation, and the quaint, tapestry-hung rooms echoed the music of children's laughter and the pleasant patter of light little feet.

The winter's day was waning. The ferryman secured his boat to the landing-stage and turned himself homewards, plodding heavily through

the snow to his thatched cottage with its blinking yellow light. The high north wind whistled and shrieked about the eaves of Sunnymeadow Farm, singing to the shivering sparrows a dreary tale of more snow soon to come. One by one the windows of the old house were illumined, the red blinds making points of pleasant rosy glow in the darkness, glow that suggested warmth and comfort.

About sunset time the chill gray sky had cleared, the mist that hung over hill and field lifted. Then a soft golden haze spreading itself over the heavens, rising slowly, gently from the west, had fallen caressingly upon the quiet country scene, upon the gray farm buildings and the old house, and the silent river. It touched, too, this golden glory, the rustic sheepfolds where the shepherds pen their flocks in such inclement weather, and wandering through the interlacing branches of the woodland's leafless trees, illumined the faded bracken and turned its faded yellow into gold. The effect was magical. The cold winter world was transformed into Fairyland.

The sunset glow quickly fading, all grew hushed and still. Only a robin's evensong, a distant sheep-bell's drowsy tinkle, broke the great silence, save for the rustling of the wind through the dried grass and fern! A certain dreamy little lad, a shepherd boy standing alone by the quiet folds, wondered did he hear the fluttering of angels' wings, the echo of angels' song. Were they not

very near to earth on this night—those angels who had brought the message of a Saviour's birth to the shepherd folk of Bethlehem at that Christmas long ago? It was only a child's sweet fancy, but it brought with it a great happiness. There was a wondrously contented light on the face of little Ben, as standing there, his great shaggy dog at his side, he looked up with trustful eyes at the wintry sky. To him at least it seemed,

“The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing.”

But the golden light had faded and the winter sun had set. It was night, a bitterly cold night, and the Christmas bells were ringing, flinging their glad message of “Peace on earth, goodwill from heaven,” far and near over the frozen fields. “Peace, peace!” Was ever better message borne home to the heart of man?

Beneath the latticed windows of Sunnymeadow Farm, a group of village children chanted a Christmas carol. Their blithe, shrill voices rang out clear and shrill on the night air—children's voices praising the children's King. A little hand drew back one of the red blinds and a little face peeped out, a pretty little face framed in sunny hair.

This was the sweet old hymn the children sang:—

“There came a little child to earth
Long ago;
And the angels of God proclaimed his birth
High and low.

Out in the night so calm and still
Their song was heard,
For they knew that the child on Bethlehem's hill,
Was Christ the Lord."

Suddenly the singing ceased. A servant hurrying from the house dispersed the children, speaking to them roughly.

"Be off with you," he said, "we don't want none o' your noise here."

And the little ones fled with frightened faces.

"Tiresome old Giles," said the tiny girl at the window, as she dropped the blind and stepped back into her cosy nursery. "I wish he wouldn't send away the nice little carol singers. Why did he send them away, Pam?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Papa told him to, I suppose. Come and sit by the fire, Marcellly. We're going to have some fun. We're each going to say what we would like Santa Claus to bring us for Christmas presents. You see we hope the good fairies will hear us, an' then they'll whisper it to Santa Claus. D'you see?"

"Oh! that would be lovely. But, Pam, d'you b'lieve in Santa Claus? *Do* you?"

"Well, I'm not sure," was the reflective reply. "You see he's never come to us, but then p'raps he doesn't know about us; that may be it. He brings lovely things to Rosalind and Phil, oh, *lovely* things; Rosalind told me so."

"But how does he know about them?" asked Marcellly.

"Their mother tells him," answered Pamela,

gravely. "Rosalind says she and Phil just tell Aunt Effie what they want, an' then she lets Santa Claus know."

"We couldn't ask *our* mother to tell him," said Marcelly. She came up to the hearthrug upon which her three sisters had grouped themselves, and the flickering firelight cast its ruddy glow upon her little quaintly-clad figure and her sweet young face with its wistful eyes. "We couldn't ask mother," she repeated.

"Oh, no! of course not," Pamela and Irene said together, and little Primrose joined in as in duty bound.

The little Ladies Carew were pretty children, alike as some sweet rose blossoms with their soft, fair hair, delicate coloring, and blue eyes. In their quaint old-fashioned dresses of soft, straight-falling stuff of olive-green they looked like the little maidens of Kate Greenaway's dainty pictures. Their appearance was quite in harmony with their ancient oak-panelled nursery, with the high-carved chimney-piece, and the faded antique cretonnes, and the uneven polished floors. To a stranger's eyes they must have seemed part of a world of long ago, these little ones of to-day.

"There are so many things I want, so very many," Pamela said, looking from one to another of her three sisters.

"But you can't have them all, you must choose one," quickly interposed Irene, and added, glibly, "I know what *I* want well enough. I want a dear little pony for all mine own, like Uncle Edgar

gave Rosalind—a little Shetland pony with a long tail and a beautiful thick mane. Oh! I do wish I were Rosalind! She's such a lucky girl. Her papa's *awfully* good to her. He gives her ever so many nice things. I'd like it if we could exchange papas."

Pamela laughed. "You talk so funnily, Irene," she said, patronizingly; "you get such odd ideas. Fancy changing papas! Such a thing is never done, never. Now do remember that, please," said the little elder sister, with great earnestness, "for I wouldn't like any one to hear you say such a silly thing. They'd think we were *awfully* ignorant, you know."

Irene yawned and attempted no defense. Pamela often tried to snub her, and always failed. Irene was the most indifferent and easy-going little person in the world. She was quite unimpressible. Even old nurse's mile-long lectures were as naught in her estimation.

"What do you want? What do you choose, Pam?" asked Marcelly.

"A diamond necklace," replied the eldest of the Ladies Carew, promptly. "A diamond necklace just like that new one of mother's, all sparkling and beautiful. Oh! how I should *love* to have it!" She clasped her small hands, and her eyes shone with excitement.

"Diamonds and a pony," repeated Marcelly, thoughtfully. "I don't think I care much for those things. I'd like some skates, rather. But there's somethin' I'd far rather have."

gravely. "Rosalind says Aunt Effie what they want, Claus know."

"We couldn't ask *our* mother," said Marcelly. She came up to the room which her three sisters had, and the flickering firelight upon her little quaintly-clad young face with its wistful look, "ask mother," she repeated.

"Oh, no! of course not," said together, and little Pamela was duty bound.

The little Ladies Carew were all alike as some sweet rose buds, with fair hair, delicate coloring, and their quaint old-fashioned dresses of falling stuff of olive-green: the little maidens of Kate Green. Their appearance was quite different from the ancient oak-panelled nursery and chimney-piece, and the faded pictures and the uneven polished floor. Eyes they must have seen long ago, these little ones.

"There are so many of them," many," Pamela said, looking at one of her three sisters.

"But you can't have them all," one," quickly interposed Pamela.

"I know what *I* want, what my dear little pony for all mine."

love us ; I think it really is," protested Irene, with an unusual outburst of feeling. "Other mothers love their little girls. I don't see why we should be treated differently."

"You ought to be used to it by this time though," said Pamela, calmly. "I'm sure *I* am. Why, it's nothing new. Mother has never cared for us, and as for papa, I daresay he wishes we'd never been born, that is if he ever thinks of us. Perhaps he never does think of us ; you see we hardly ever are seen by him. Often he's away all the year from one Christmas to another. It's nothing new, Irene."

"But it's very horrid and unkind," persisted the younger sister. "We're not naughty, and we're not ugly. Why should we be treated like the captive princesses in the fairy tale?" demanded Irene, tragically.

"Nobody wanted them an' nobody wants us. We're the same in that way," said Pamela. "But this isn't a dungeon, I'm glad to say, an' nurse an' Miss Dobson aren't dragons. We're not beaten or starved like the poor princesses."

"But it's dull," objected Irene, "dreadfully dull. We live here always—always—an' never go away ; we don't even go to the seaside for a month in summer like the rectory children. Uncle Edgar's children aren't treated like us ; they go to parties an' the pantomime, an' they go about with Uncle Edgar and Aunt Effie, an' visit at friends' houses, an' they have ponies to ride, an' lovely clothes to wear, an'—an'—lots of pocket-

money. Oh! I do wish we belonged to Uncle Edgar instead of to papa."

"We never shall, though," Pamela remarked, coolly, "so why make this fuss? Don't grumble, Irene; it isn't a bit of good. When I'm grown up I shall be very beautiful, as beautiful as mother, an' a prince will come seeking me, like the prince who found Sleeping Beauty. An'—an'—we shall run right away from this silly old Sunnymeadow out into the lovely bright world, an' be happy ever afterwards. Really, Irene, I believe Sunnymeadow's a sleeping palace; I'm sure it's quiet enough." She broke into a merry laugh.

"It's only a farm," said Irene, ruefully, "an' a very dull farm too, an' I don't believe a prince will *ever* come for you or for me, either. I'm almost sure he won't. Why, Pam, the princess in the story was *very* beautiful! Her hair hung to her feet and was like gold silk, an' her dress was made of rose-petals. We're not a bit like that, you know. We're just ordinary little girls with horrid green frocks and pinnies."

"We shan't wear pinnies when we're grown-up young ladies, you goose," laughed Pamela; "an' we needn't wear green dresses if we don't want to. How silly you are, Irene!"

"I don't want to be grown-up an' grand," said simple, little Marcelly. "I'd rather be always a little girl an' stay with you all an' nurse. Only, if I might choose I'd be a boy, 'cause then mother would love me."

"I expect you'll think differently when you're

older," remarked Pamela, with all the superiority of her ten summers. "You're very young still, only seven years old."

Marcelly was silent. The gentle little thing never ventured to assert herself with her sisters.

"I'm sure it's tea-time," Irene suddenly exclaimed, "an' Nancy hasn't brought the lamp. She always forgets unless nurse rings for her. Where *is* nurse, by the way?"

"She's been out of the room for a long time," said Pamela. "P'raps she's gone to talk to Mrs. Comfort. They like to have a chat together sometimes."

"An' I like a chat with Mrs. Comfort," remarked Irene, with a smile. "She always gives me such nice cake when I go to see her. When I'm grown-up I think I'll be a housekeeper, then I'll have the key of the store-cupboard and be able to eat as many nice things as I like."

"Oh, greedy!" cried Pamela.

"Prim hasn't said what Christmas present she wants," Marcelly reminded them.

"Well, Prim, what will you have? A new dolly, eh? Anne Boleyn's rather knocked about, isn't she? I see she's lost an eye. I'd have a china doll this time if I were you; it's more lasting than wax." Pamela looked encouragingly at her little sister.

Primrose scrambled to her feet and stood erect on the tiger-skin hearth-rug. Her pretty blue eyes sparkled with innocent excitement.

"I'd like a baby doll!" she cried. "A baby

dolly with eyes that open and shut, an' curly hair an'—an'—little *tooths*, an'—yes—an' a blue p'lissee with fur on. Oh, I do hope Mr. Santa Claus will bring Prim that!" When eager or elated she often spoke of herself in the third person. Primrose was a very little girl still, only five years old.

The door had been opened and some one had entered unheard while Primrose was speaking. It was not Santa Claus with his arms full of beautiful presents. It was only old nurse, her kind face positively beaming with smiles. The children were laughing good-naturedly at their little sister when she advanced into the room, and pouncing upon Primrose caught her up in her arms and fairly smothered her with kisses.

"O my blessed, blessed dear, as ever was! O my own honey!" cried old nurse.

Nurse, although devoted to her little girls, was not usually a demonstrative person. The children looked at her in amazement, and Primrose extricated herself from her embracing arms.

"Why, nurse, I's not ill!" cried the little one.

"Bless you no, my darlin'! But there, how am I to tell you all?"

"What is it, nurse; what is it?" asked Pamela, impatiently, "I hate mysteries." The eldest of the little Ladies Carew was an imperious small personage.

"Has grandpapa sent us some Christmas presents?" Marcelly asked eagerly.

"Of course not," cried Irene, "he never does. But what is it, nurse? Do be quick and tell us."

"It's the Christmas angels as have brought a gift to this ancient house," old nurse said solemnly, and there were tears in her kind eyes. "The best gift as have come to it for many an' many a year, my little ladies; as welcome a gift as it's possible for my lord an' my lady to have."

"Is it my dolly, nurse?" cried little Primrose, her baby face alight with eagerness. "Is it my dolly what the Kismus angels have bringed?"

"Your dolly sure enough, my little lady; a real, living, beautiful dolly, a baby brother for my dears."

Silence greeted the good woman's words. Pamela and Irene exchanged expressive glances. Marcelly's eyes filled with tears, her lips quivered.

After a moment Pamela spoke. "I suppose papa and mother are pleased," she said, stiffly.

"Pleased!" nurse cried, "well that's but a poor word, my dear. His lordship's nearly wild with delight. He's sent a groom on the fastest horse in the stable to take the news to your grandpa, and the same messenger was to telegraph to Carnegie House an' to Deramore Park. He don't say much, his lordship don't, but it's easy enough to read his face for me as has known him since he were a mere baby not so old as little Lady Primrose here. And, deary me! how Mr. Blissenden will take on to be sure! A grandson has been the dream of the old gentleman's life for all these eleven years an' more. A son and heir! Well, I'm thankful as I've lived to see this blessed day."

"A little boy," murmured Marcelly, tearfully.
"Mother will love *him*."

Pamela's handsome little face flushed crimson.
"What an absurd fuss about a baby," she cried, impatiently; "I never knew such nonsense."

Nurse looked at her reproachfully.

"But 'tis no ordinary babe, Lady Pamela," she said, "'tis the heir to one o' the oldest earldoms in the United Kingdom, the longed-for heir come at last after four little sisters. May heaven bless the sweet child the Christmas angels have brought!"

"Did you see the Kismus angels, nurse, oh, did you?"

"Bless you, no, my little Lady Primrose. They don't show themselves to such as me. Our poor earth-dimmed eyes couldn't stand the sight, my dear."

"He's sure to be a horrid spoiled little thing, and I know we shall detest him," flashed out Pamela. "He will be everybody, and no one will ever care a bit for us poor little girls." She turned and ran from the room, her face crimson, her hazel eyes ablaze with angry light.

"What a fuss about a silly baby!" Irene's lips curled scornfully.

Old nurse looked from the unresponsive countenance of Irene to the tearful eyes of Marcelly, and her heart sank within her. Had these little sisters no better greeting for the child whom the Christmas angels had brought?

Her unspoken query was answered almost be-

fore it was formed. A little hand sought hers, and Primrose, lifting a sweet infantine face, said eagerly, "Nurse, Prim loves the little baby bruvver. Please take Prim to see the baby, nurse; her wants to kiss him."

"Bless you, my precious, that I will!"

Nurse caught her up thankfully and kissed her with rapture. Then she bore her away out of the cosy nursery and down the corridors that were dim with winter twilight. And Primrose, looking back, called to contemptuous Irene and sad-faced Marcelly, standing silently before the glowing cheerful fire:—

"Prim's goin' to kiss the little new baby, the bruvver the Kismus angels bringed."

There was no faintest shadow of jealousy in the innocent, loving little heart of Primrose. She, at least, was ready to greet warmly the Christmas baby.

Little Lord Carnegie lay upon his nurse's lap wrapped in many shawls. The nurse put the shawls aside that Primrose might see her tiny new brother, and bending over him the child gazed in wonder upon the tiny sleeping face.

"Why, he's littler than my dolly!" she cried. And Lord Carnegie's nurse, whom the children knew as Bents, and Prim's own nurse laughed together at the surprise of her blue eyes.

"He's not very big, certainly," admitted Mrs. Bents; "but he's a fine child, and rare and pretty." She glanced proudly at her precious charge.

Primrose looked earnestly at the baby. His eyes were closed in sleep, the dark lashes resting on his little cheek. She stooped and gently kissed the small pink face. As she did so, the child opened his eyes and seemed to smile at her. Yes, it was distinctly a smile—a confiding, happy smile that seemed to recognize the love and tenderness of the little sister.

“He smiled at Prim,” cried the delighted child.
“He *really* smiled, nurse. Dear, *dear* little baby!”

“Well, did you ever!” exclaimed old nurse in wonderment. “The pretty dear’s right enough. He *did* smile at her.”

“I saw him myself,” assented Mrs. Bents. “You had his lordship’s first smile, Lady Primrose, that’s plain. And it’s a rare thing for so young a baby to be noticing like that. But there,” added the good woman, mysteriously, “these Christmas children ain’t like none others. They’re more canny always. They knows a deal, do Christmas children. That’s a fact.”

“I think he knows I love him,” Primrose said, very sweetly and simply; “that’s it.”

She would like to have remained with her little new brother; she felt she could never tire of gazing in wonder upon the tiny face of that wonderful, living, breathing dolly. He was a marvel to her. But nurse said tea was ready, and they must return to the other little ladies, who would be thinking Santa Claus had spirited them away.

So very reluctantly Primrose said "Good-night" to the fascinating little stranger.

"And ain't the other sisters comin' to see his lordship, nurse?" asked Mrs. Bents, in some surprise.

"Not this evening. They're a bit took aback, poor dears, and upset. They'll be all right to-morrow, most like."

"A case o' noses being put out of joint, eh?" laughed Mrs. Bents.

Old nurse glanced significantly at Primrose. "Little pitchers! Ah, I see," laughed the other woman.

"Not intentional," said nurse, quickly, "she'd never repeat if she knew it would do mischief, she's too sweet-natured a child for that. But there, you know, Mrs. Bents, least said soonest mended." She turned and took Primrose by the hand. "Come now, my dear."

As they were leaving the room the child, slipping her hand from old nurse's, quickly stooped and picked a feather from the floor. It was a little white fluffy feather, a fragment of eider-down that had escaped from the smart satin *douée* of the baby's cradle. But to Primrose it was treasure-trove.

"O nursey!" she cried, joyfully, wonderingly, "look, *do* look! 'Tis a feather from an angel's wing, one of the boo'ful Kismus angels that brought dear baby."

CHAPTER II.

HIS LITTLE LORDSHIP.

“Living on earth like angel new divined.”

SPENSER.

“Just to show that stars and flowers,
And the children too,
Once, above this world of ours,
In his garden grew.”

EDITH PRINCE-SNOWDEN.

HE was christened Noel, fit name for a Christmas child ; but no one ever called him anything but “Carol.”

Carol, Christmas Carol ; the sweetest Carol that ever brightened the old house of Sunnymeadow, so every one thought and said.

Lady Deramore adored the tiny son who had come at last after four little daughters ; the son and heir in whom were centered so many hopes and fears.

She did not love little children, nor understand them. Pamela and Irene, Marcelly and little Primrose awakened no interest, no affection in her heart. She was indifferent to these dear little maidens, who must with their sweet simplicity have filled with joy any other mother.

But Carol inspired within her all the love and tenderness his little sisters had never known. Her whole soul went out to him, and she simply idolized her infant son.

And to others the child was a source of infinite delight and pride. Lord Deramore, who had longed intensely for a son and heir to carry on in direct line the fine old title of which he was almost inordinately proud, was more than delighted with the beautiful healthy child who had come with Christmas; while Lady Deramore's father could speak of nobody and nothing but "my grandson, Lord Carnegie."

This maternal grandfather was not to be scoffed at. Mr. Blissenden had manufactured a certain popular soap to such purpose that he had become the richest man in all Worcestershire. He resided in a fine house resplendently furnished at Malvern, and aspired to the society of county magnates without suffering repulse from those highly-connected but eminently practical personages.

Nobody had wondered when Lord Deramore married the beautiful and the wealthy Miss Blissenden. Truth to tell she was more lovely and accomplished than many better-born maidens. And then everybody knew that Mr. Blissenden was worth sixty thousand a year.

Mr. Blissenden thought a great deal of his aristocratic son-in-law, but he thought even more of his infant grandson. He openly announced that he should leave every penny he possessed to little Lord Carnegie. This was well, for the Carews

were an impoverished race; Lord Deramore was poor and extravagant, and money was a scarce commodity in the distinguished family.

Almost every day old Mr. Blissenden came down to Sunnymeadow to make inquiries as to the health and spirits of his tiny grandson. He did not send to inquire, but came in person, driving himself in a big handsome mail phaeton with fine, high-stepping horses and an elaborately-attired groom who had a big cockade in his hat. It was a very smart turn-out, and Mr. Blissenden, who loved grandeur and show, rejoiced greatly in it. His heart swelled with pride as he gazed upon the painted coat of arms that decorated a conspicuous panel of the carriage. He chuckled softly to himself when his eyes rested upon the glittering silver harness of his high-stepping bays.

He was an eccentric and not altogether pleasant old gentleman. The little Ladies Carew were wont to fly to their nursery and stay therein very quietly when they saw those splendid bays of his turn the corner of the drive. His rough voice, and loud, abrupt manner struck terror to their childish souls.

But they need not have feared his advances, which were *nil*. He never asked for them. He came to see "the son and heir," and when he had sufficiently admired that tiny but important personage he took himself off again without bestowing a thought upon the four little granddaughters, who watched his departure from their nursery window much as the captive princesses watched

the departure of the ogre Crunch-'em-up, in the old fairy story.

Little Lord Carnegie occupied a newly-furnished and highly-decorated suite of rooms far away from the homely, old-fashioned nursery in which his sisters lived. This new domain was entirely his little lordship's, and he and his attendant, Mrs. Bents, held it in sole possession. Pamela, Irene, and Marcelly seldom saw their little brother, nor did they seek to see him. They did not love the new baby. They were jealous of him; the attention and consideration he received rankled bitterly in their childish hearts.

But in this as in many other ways, the youngest of the little Ladies Carew differed from her sisters. Primrose loved little Carol with all her simple childlike heart. To her he seemed marvelously beautiful, this wonderful live dolly that the Christmas angels had brought. She was never tired of watching him, of playing with him. A dozen times a day she would steal into the luxurious nursery in the west wing, "just to see baby."

Mrs. Bents always gave the little girl a kindly welcome. She was a good-hearted woman and fond of children, and little Lady Primrose was a special favorite of hers.

"She's such a gentle child," she would say to old nurse, "an' that pretty-spoken."

So very often this little sister would sit beside the cradle of the sleeping baby singing softly to him quaint, old-fashioned ditties that she had learned from old nurse, or silently gazing with

wondering blue eyes upon the sweet, unconscious face of the Christmas child.

Carol soon learned to love the familiar little face. When Prim laughed and clapped her hands at him he would look up at her and smile and coo softly like some tiny, newly-fledged wood-pigeon, and afterwards as he grew bigger and stronger he would stretch out his baby hands to her and echo joyfully her merry, rippling laugh.

"My's sure him loves me, nurse," Primrose would say in a very glad voice, "my's *quite* sure."

And she was right.

The days and weeks flew by. The long-lying snow melted at last, and the little yellow and white crocuses and those pure, tiny blossoms, the snowdrops, popped up through the warm, brown mould and laughed at the spring sunshine. All the birds in the old-fashioned garden of Sunnymeadow Farm chirruped and sang as though they were so happy that they didn't know what to do with themselves.

Spring came on apace. There was a soft, west wind and tender, golden sunshine. The little Ladies Carew plucked with eager hands the sweet, shy violets that nestled beneath their leaves in the sheltered copses of pine and larch. The meadows were gay with fragrant cowslips. High up into the blue, blue sky soared the aspiring lark, singing oh, so merrily, that summer was nigh.

The little pink-tipped field daisies, and the snowy young lambs, and the Christmas baby at Sunnymeadow Farm grew and flourished equally

as these sunny blue days sped by. In spring-time all young things thrive, for youth and sunshine ever go hand in hand, and May is the month of new life and hope refreshed.

The child whom the Christmas angels brought grew more beautiful every day. His mother's heart beat fast with joyful pride as she gazed upon his perfect baby face. He was so pretty and so healthy. He had a smile that seemed to illumine his sweet infantine countenance, and as for his eyes they were for all the world like two shining stars, while their deep color reflected the blue of the azure summer sky.

And he was such a happy, contented baby. He never cried nor fretted; he was never cross; in fact, he seemed to be chiefly made up of dimples and smiles.

"He is the most beautiful child in the world!" exclaimed Lady Deramore.

No one contradicted her.

The fact was no one wished to contradict. Carol was so pretty and so sweet that every one who saw him loved him at once. He was the dearest little baby that can be imagined.

"But then Christmas children are never aught but pretty," old Mrs Bents would say, mysteriously.

"My's *velly* sorry you're goin' away," Primrose said.

Carol was sleeping quietly in his cradle, his little sister sitting beside him, and Mrs. Bents was

sewing in the bow window. It was a mild and pleasant May day. The window stood open and a soft breeze, flower-scented, stole in over the primroses in the box on the outer ledge.

"My's *velly* sorry," Primrose repeated.

"An' it's sad it makes me to leave you an' my little lord there, dearie," said Mrs. Bents, feelingly. "But there! we all have our dooties, an' bide here longer I can't."

"Will you come back d' you fink?" questioned the little girl, anxiously.

Mrs. Bents shook her head. "There's no more need of me here. I'm goin' away to a queer old castle in the north o' Ireland, my little lady, to take care of a baby what's sick. I'm bound to go; his mamma's the kindest friend I have in the world, an' when she sent for me I couldn't say no to her, that's a fact." She cast a regretful glance at Carol sleeping comfortably in his highly-decorated cradle.

"Is a new nurse comin' to take care of my's little bruvver?" asked Prim.

"Yes, my dear. Her ladyship's engaged a young woman from London with a written character half a mile long. I don't trust those written characters, not I! but there! I hope as she'll do her dooty by yonder blessed lamb."

"Why can't our nurse take care o' baby asides us?"

"A natural question to my mind. But no, my dear, her ladyship wishes the little lord to have his sep'rate nursery an' attendant; she's told me

so much, more'n once when I've ventured to suggest as your nurse should take him."

There was an anxious little pucker on Prim's smooth brow. "My hopes the new nurse will be kind. My hopes her'll let Prim come an' see dear baby," she said, rather tremulously.

"Why, bless you, yes! she'll never say you no," cried Mrs. Bents, hurriedly, as she noted the child's tearful eyes. "Don't you fret, honey. 'Twill be all right."

A day or two later Mrs. Bents went away and the new nurse took her place.

Primrose wept copious tears and hung affectionately about Mrs. Bents' neck when that good woman bade her good-by; but the little child in his cradle laughed and cooed in happy unconsciousness that he was about to lose his best friend.

The new nurse was not expected until the evening, but Mrs. Bents left quite early in the day. Perhaps she did not care to see her little charge in the arms of a stranger; perhaps the lengthy journey she was about to undertake obliged her to start thus betimes.

"My will never forget you," cried Primrose, kissing Mrs. Bents' kind, homely face.

"Bless you, honey! An' I know my precious baby there will always have a lovin' an' true friend in his sister. Take care o' him, dearie, when his old nurse is gone."

"I will, I will!" cried the child. Her little face was alight with earnestness.

Primrose was in her brother's room when the new nurse came. The little girl looked up at the stranger very anxiously. Children usually possess singularly correct initiative judgment, and Primrose was no exception to a pretty general rule. She knew at once that she should never be fond of Carol's new nurse. She at once and ever afterwards distrusted her.

And yet the stranger was not unprepossessing. She was tall and looked strong and active. Her complexion was olive-tinted and her eyes dark and restless.

Mrs. Bents was old and rather fat, and this new nurse was young and slim. Mrs. Bents wore a homely linsey gown and a Paisley shawl, while her successor was neatly attired in well-made black garments. Lady Deramore remarked to her husband that the new attendant had a very superior appearance, but Primrose preferred in her childish heart homely Mrs. Bents.

Lady Deramore came into the nursery—Carol's nursery—with the stranger. She gave her a few instructions, and asked her some questions as to her experience with children. The replies she received seemed to satisfy her, for she smiled graciously as she turned away to the door.

The new nurse stopped her. "If you please, my lady," she said, respectfully and quietly, "I understood when you engaged me that I was to have the charge of one child only, little Lord Carnegie." She glanced significantly at Primrose bending over her brother's cradle.

"That is so," said Lady Deramore, "but I understood from his lordship's last nurse that his sister amuses him. Lady Primrose may therefore be with him sometimes."

The new attendant bent her head acquiescently, and a flush of relief came into Prim's eager, anxious little face.

"Oh, *fank* you, *muvver!*" cried the child, gratefully.

Lady Deramore did not seem to hear her. All her attention was engrossed by Carol. She bent to kiss the sleeping baby and then swept out of the room.

Primrose watched her departure with wistful eyes. Primrose thought her graceful, lovely mother the most beautiful lady in all the world. She would have loved her had she dared, but Lady Deramore's manner to her little daughters discouraged any expression of affection.

The new nurse came and stood beside Carol's cradle, looking down earnestly at the peaceful little face of the sleeping baby. Her hard mouth took a softer expression as she gazed thus and tears sprang to her eyes. She fell upon her knees and passionately pressed her lips to the tiny hand that lay upon the *douvée*.

"Little darling! *my* little darling!" Primrose heard her murmur.

The astonished child looked wonderingly at the weeping woman. "Why d'you k'y? Why d'you say *my* little darling?" she asked, quickly. "Him's *muvver's* baby an' ours—Pam's an'

Celly's an' Irene's an' mine. He isn't yours at all." She looked up into the strange nurse's face with strongest disapproval and distrust shining in her innocent blue eyes. "Him's not yours," she said, energetically.

"Dear me! I'd forgotten you were here," said the woman, almost roughly, "and you've no call to fly out at me like that, little lady. It isn't good manners."

Primrose shrank back with a timid gesture. The stranger's fierce dark eyes frightened her.

Her companion's face softened. "Well, well," she said, "I'm not offended, my little lady, an' you needn't grudge me callin' y'r baby brother a darling. That won't hurt you. He reminds me of—of a little baby as I once loved very dear, d'you see? Why, as I stooped over him just now all the past seemed swept away, an' I seemed to look on that dear little face once more. That's how I come to say 'my darling.'"

"Where's the little baby now, the little baby you loved?" questioned Primrose, innocently.

"Dead and buried," answered the woman, in a hard and bitter voice.

"Then him's in heaven an' God is takin' care o' him," said the child, simply. "Don't look so sad! Him's *velly* happy."

"You're a kind little lady," exclaimed the new nurse, huskily, "I make no doubt o' that."

"Shall you love my baby bruvver?" asked Primrose, looking up at her with anxious blue eyes.

"Aye," assented the woman, grimly, "I can promise you that much."

"Oh, I's *so* glad!" cried Prim, clasping her small hands.

Presently she asked the new nurse, "Please what's your name? what shall my call you?"

"Rhoda—Rhoda Grange."

"Fank you," the child said, gravely. "My name's Primrose, cos I comed wi' the primroses one springtime you know."

"And the little lord's?"

"Baby? Him's Callol—Kismus Callol. Him's always called that."

"Carol, Christmas Carol!" repeated the woman, and her voice sounded quite soft and gentle. She bent over the baby, sleeping sweetly in his cot, and kissed him again.



"The hay—the fragrant, delicious, freshly-cut hay."

CHAPTER III.

PRIM'S LITTLE BROTHER.

"It may be that he keeps waiting
Till the coming of my feet,
Some gift of such rare blessedness,
Some joy so strangely sweet,
That my lips can only tremble
With the thanks I cannot speak."

NEVER was a child better cared for than the child who was Rhoda's charge. He looked the living picture of a healthy, happy baby.

Lady Deramore constantly congratulated herself upon her wise selection of an attendant for her little son.

"The child has a treasure of a nurse," she told her friends, confidentially.

Primrose was often with her baby brother. Rhoda encouraged her visits to the nursery, and always gave her a kindly welcome. But Primrose did not trust Carol's new nurse. She could have given no reason for her distrust, but it existed, and, moreover, refused to be uprooted. She *could not* like Rhoda.

The woman entertained not the slightest suspicion of the state of this little lady's feelings towards her. Perhaps she would not have cared had she known that Primrose neither liked nor trusted her. She was not a sensitive person.

She was not sensitive, but she loved Carol. There was no doubting that latter fact. Had the little lord been her own child she could not have loved him much more.

Spring freshness melted dreamily into maturer glories of summer's meridian, and primroses and violets gave place to blue hyacinths and golden marigolds. The little ladies of Sunnymeadow Farm romped in the hay—the fragrant, delicious, freshly-cut hay—and decked each other with garlands and chains of sweet wild flowers. Lord and Lady Deramore were away in London for the season, and the children had Sunnymeadow all to themselves throughout this holiday weather. Miss Dobson had gone away for six weeks, and there were no lessons, so the four little sisters forgot that they had not long since pitied themselves as

"captive princesses," and managed to enjoy their simple, free country life very much.

The Christmas baby seemed to grow more merry and more pretty with every succeeding summer's day. He looked very sweet in his white frock and big linen hat, and he tumbled with Primrose in the hay, and stretched out his chubby hands in vain endeavor to catch the brilliant blue butterflies that went skimming by on gauzy wings.

When tired of play Carol would lie in the soft, warm hay and gaze up at the merry birds flitting from branch to branch of the fresh green trees that bordered the meadow, and, looking still higher, would study wonderingly the blue, blue sky that seemed reflected in his own innocent azure eyes. He loved to lie thus, and would look so happy and so interested that Primrose told Rhoda she thought he must see pretty and wonderful things that were invisible to them.

"P'raps him can see thro' the blue sky right into heaven," she said, "an' watch the angels flyin' about an' playin' on their harps. D'you fink he can, Rhoda?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Rhoda answered, "but may be so, for I make no doubt that little children can see a deal that's hid from our eyes."

"Dear baby! He *do* look happy," cried Carol's little sister, fondly.

Old Nurse Nancy and the other servants at Sunnymeadow looked with disapproval unlimited upon Rhoda Grange. They were greatly offended because she held herself aloof from them all and



IN THE GROUNDS AT SUNNYMEADOW.



never made friends with any one of the establishment, not even with nurse, who had taken care of Lady Deramore when she was a tiny baby, younger than Carol, and who had lived in the families of Blissenden and Carew ever since. Old nurse shook her head and said confidentially to Mrs Comfort, the housekeeper, that no doubt Mrs. Grange had her own very good reasons for reticence. She, nurse, for one never did hold with "them silent folk," there was no good in them, depend upon it. Why, if they had aught good to say, of course they would say it.

Lord and Lady Deramore were away from Sunnymeadow for some months. At the close of the London season they went to a fashionable German watering-place and from thence to Scotland. Mr. Blissenden's shooting-box was a snug little place, and the combined fascinations of the grouse and the heather were such that chill October was creeping steadily towards a close when at last they returned to their country home in the Severn valley.

Lady Deramore found Sunnymeadow "frightfully dull," and seldom visited the old place; but as the residence of Baby Carol it was possessed of attractions hitherto undreamed of.

Primrose saw very little of her baby brother during the week that followed the home-coming of Lord and Lady Deramore.

Carol's mother was often in his nursery, and she resented the presence of Primrose because she

engrossed her little brother's attention. Lady Deramore was jealous of Carol's very evident affection for Primrose. She wanted all his baby love for herself.

"You have your own nursery, child. Go to it. I am here to play with and amuse your brother. Can't you understand you're not wanted?" she said sharply, one day.

Tears sprang to Prim's blue eyes and her childish mouth quivered. "My finks him wants me; dear baby wants me," she murmured, tremulously.

Some people might have been touched by her simple words. Lady Deramore was not. "Don't dare to answer me," she cried, indignantly. "Leave this room at once, and do not return until you have permission."

Thus was the little one banished from her earthly paradise, the harmless earthly paradise of her baby brother's love. Poor little Prim! She sobbed herself to sleep that night, and ere she slept she knelt and prayed: "O God! I's a velly naughty child 'cos I can't love muvver any more. Please make me good, please make me love her. An' oh, please, make her let me go back to dear baby!"

She prayed aloud in her simple childish fashion at old nurse's knee; and when her little prayer was finished that kind soul stooped and kissed her, and called her "My poor lamb, my poor little lamb!" many times, and Prim was comforted.

Sometimes when the little Ladies Carew were out walking with Miss Dobson or their nurses they

would meet their brother taking his daily airing in a smart high-wheeled perambulator. Then Primrose would dart at him, and kiss and hug him rapturously and cry with joy. Her sisters would laugh at her and call her a little goose, but she did not care. A kiss from dear baby would fully compensate for all the laughter in the world.

One evening, when Primrose was in bed and asleep, old nurse and Rhoda Grange came softly into the room.

"She'd break her heart if he went away w'out her bidding him good-by, I do believe," said nurse.

"So I thought," remarked Rhoda; "and I said to myself she shall see him whatever comes of it. Just now my lady's at dinner, so she'll be none the wiser."

Nurse sighed and made peace with her conscience by expressing a belief that Lady Primrose's mamma *couldn't* grudge her a good-by kiss from her brother.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Rhoda Grange, grimly.

This, old nurse affected not to hear. Bending over Primrose she gently awakened her. "Hush! don't make a sound, dearie, that's a good child. Your little brother's a-goin' away to Brighton to-morrow, honey, and Miss Grange have kindly come to fetch you to say good-by to him," whispered the good woman.

"Isn't dear baby never comin' back here again?" asked the child, with sorrowful, dilating eyes.

"Why, bless you, yes, my little lady! He's

only goin' to be away a month or two," said Rhoda soothingly.

"No, no," sobbed Primrose, shaking her fair head, "my knows him won't come back again."

Nurse had some trouble in pacifying her, she was in great tribulation, and would not listen to reason.

"Him never will come back. Him never will come back," she repeated constantly, and then her tears flowed afresh.

Presently, when she grew quieter, Rhoda took her up in her arms and carried her away through the old house into the far-away nursery where Carol slept. The little lord's baby mind was far, far away in dreamland, and Rhoda whispered to Primrose not to awaken him.

Bending over her baby brother Prim kissed his sweet little unconscious face tenderly. Soft as was the touch of her childish lips it awakened the light sleeper. Opening his eyes, Carol smiled up at his little sister. That smile, reminding her as it did of the first smile of the child whom the Christmas angels brought was quite too much for poor Prim. She broke into passionate tears, and Rhoda hurriedly carried her away.

That was the last time Primrose saw the dear little Christmas baby she loved so well!

Poor Prim! how she cried when she heard next morning, that Carol had been taken away by an early train to Brighton with her father and mother. She did not mind the departure of her parents, who had never loved her, and whom she had never been allowed to love. But, O baby, baby!



Sunnymeadow.

CHAPTER IV.

A LOST TREASURE.

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight.

Will ye no' come back again?
Better lo'ed ye canna be,
Will ye no' come back again?

LADY NAIRN.

His little lordship was a very smart little lordship when he appeared in his high-wheeled perambulator by the sea at Brighton. His dainty garments were of the costliest and simplest, and his big hat with its picturesque rosettes might well have belonged to one of the pretty babies in Kate Greenaway's artistic books.

Many a one in the fashionable crowd turned to look after him. Rhoda Grange, filled with pride in her tiny charge, often caught a whispered comment on his lovely looks. He was not a child to pass unnoticed. It was his beauty rather than his pretty garments that attracted attention in that fashionable crowd, where almost every other child was richly and tastefully dressed. People turned their heads not to gaze upon the big rosetted hat and the feather-trimmed pelisse, but to look at the sweet little face beneath the big hat's shady brim.

Such a sweet little face it was, beautiful in peach-like complexion, delicate features, rosebud mouth, and sunny blue eyes, but even more sweet than beautiful by reason of the innocent and trusting expression that never left it. It was that look that had made Primrose whisper to Rhoda that she believed dear baby could see right through the blue sky into heaven and watch the angels there.

"Do look at that child. He's a perfect cherub," said one lady to another as he was wheeled past them in his perambulator.

"Dear me! it's really quite an angelic little face," exclaimed her companion, admiringly.

And so it was, both angelic and sweet in its inexpressible innocence and simplicity—a face that might be fresh from heaven; a face that seemed fit heritage of a child whom the Christmas angels had brought.

Lady Deramore, who had never expressed the

slightest affection for nor interest in her four little girls, was quite extravagantly proud and fond of this little son. The admiration his baby grace excited filled her with exultation. She positively reveled in planning and choosing the delightfully simple but very costly garments in which he would appear on the promenade, or in the drawing-room when intimate friends asked to see him, as they frequently did ask.

Lord Deramore had taken a house in Brunswick Place for the season, and Mr. and Mrs. Blissenden were staying at the Grand Hotel. Every fine morning little Lord Carnegie would be wheeled down in his perambulator to visit his fond grandparents; and when the morning was not fine, old Mr. Blissenden would send or call personally at his son-in-law's house to inquire for the little lord.

Before the Christmas angels brought Carol to Sunnymeadow Mr. Blissenden had been more than inclined to look with cold disapproval upon his extravagant albeit aristocratic son-in-law, and he had moreover remarked more than once to his wife that that noble peer was an expensive luxury as a near relation. But the coming of a little son and heir had altered all this—and a baby presence brought—as it often will bring—peace and unity.

“Lord Carnegie will be one of the wealthiest of our aristocracy,” old Mr. Blissenden would say, with a chuckle. “I shall leave him every penny I possess, and the next Lord Deramore will be the

richest of his race—thanks to that good old soap of mine!”

Lady Deramore shuddered. She did not love “the soap,” although she fully appreciated the golden store it yielded.

“I think we might sink that excellent composition beneath a coronet,” she murmured.

“No, no, don’t be so ungrateful,” laughed old Mr. Blissenden, who was not super-sensitive.

“He’s such a fine, healthy youngster; such a thoroughly jolly little chap!” cried Lord Carnegie’s grandfather proudly.

Mr. Blissenden was calling at the house in Brunswick Place, and, obeying a message from Lady Deramore, Rhoda had brought his little lordship down to the morning-room to see his grandfather.

“Jolly little fellow! Hi, ti, ti, then! C’l’ck, c’l’ck, weu, weu, we!” cried old Mr. Blissenden, dangling his ponderous gold watch chain in little Carol’s face, and chucklingly emitting the most uncouth and most extraordinary sounds that are by some people supposed to convey an agreeable impression to an infant mind.

Lady Deramore, arrayed in the most becoming of morning gowns, held her son in her arms, and listened with much complacency to Mr. Blissenden’s eulogies on his grandson. Rhoda Grange stood behind her lady’s chair silent and respectful.

“Such a thoroughly healthy baby!” cried Mr. Blissenden, exultantly. “What limbs! what

rosy cheeks! what dimples! never a day's illness in his life, eh? Capital, capital!"

"Oh! he is a strong little fellow," assented Lady Deramore, smiling. "He's always been bonnie and strong, like the hardy little winter plant he is." Then, her face clouding over, she added, pityingly, "How different to that poor little son of the Rutherfords! A cripple from his birth, so Mrs. Hepworth tells me. Perfectly incurable, she says. And he'll be the Marquis of Blankshire and have more than sixty thousand a year. A cripple! I had rather my child were dead than maimed or deformed. Oh, horrible!"

"By George! yes. But we've no such trouble, Celia. This little one is the picture of health."

"If he were not," cried Lady Deramore, with a shudder, "really," she repeated, and repeated with much earnestness and *empressment*, "I had rather he were dead than a cripple."

Rhoda Grange bit her lip hard, and her cold face flushed crimson. Involuntarily she made a movement as though to take her little charge from his mother's arms.

"No, you may leave his lordship with me for a little while. I am not going out for half an hour," said Lady Deramore, with a gesture of dismissal.

Rhoda bent her head and quietly left the room.

Lady Deramore did not look at Carol's nurse, or she might have been astonished by the expression of her usually indifferent face. But Mr. Blissenden looked and marveled.

"A sullen-faced woman that nurse of the boy's," he remarked, as she closed the door behind her.

"I don't notice it," said Lady Deramore, elevating her delicately-pencilled eyebrows and speaking in a tone of cold disapproval. "I only know she's an excellent and thoroughly reliable servant."

"H'm! A sullen face," repeated Mr. Blissenden stolidly. He was not easily snubbed. Lady Deramore might freeze other people, but she never succeeded in freezing her plebeian parent.

Presently Lady Deramore and her father started for a ride. Little Lord Carnegie was returned to the retirement of the nursery, and Rhoda had her charge to herself once more. Taking the child in her arms, she gazed upon his baby face with passionate affection. "O my dear! my own dear!" she cried, "I love you as your mother never will, for I'd love you sick or maimed or anyhow; love you just for your sweet self, darling, not for your beauty an' your health."

And Carol, all unconscious of the warm feelings he inspired in this normally cold heart, smiled up at her innocently and trustingly, and stretched out his tiny dimpled hands in vain endeavor to catch the stray rays of winter sunshine that had stolen in between the warm window-curtains.

CHAPTER V.

LOST !

IN the evening of the next day, soon after seven o'clock, Lady Deramore was sitting in an easy-chair by her boudoir fire, carelessly turning the pages of a novel which did not particularly interest her. She was resting preparatory to a night to be spent in a round of gaieties, and she was tired, for she had been to a succession of crowded "afternoons," and had also "looked in" at a concert to hear a celebrated singer who just then held all Brighton entranced.

Presently her fair head fell back upon the big silk cushions of the easy-chair, and she dropped into a pleasant little nap and dreamed delightfully of diamonds and chiffons.

Tap, tap, tap, tap. Some one was knocking hurriedly upon the boudoir door.

The diamonds melted as if by magic, the chiffons vanished into space, and Lady Deramore sat up and wondered crossly what had interrupted her pleasant slumber.

Tap, tap, tap, tap. The persistent knocking upon the door was resumed.

"Come in," Lady Deramore said, not too graciously. She was annoyed at being thus disturbed.

She was surprised when in response to this permission Mrs. Comfort presented herself. Mrs. Comfort was an exemplary housekeeper, and very rarely did she trouble her lady with matters domestic. Lady Deramore was at once convinced that this unusual visit boded no good.

"Has the cook given notice?" she inquired, in great trepidation. "Don't say so, Comfort, I beg. We shall never replace him. Such soups, and his *souffles* are a dream."

The normally placid housekeeper looked very grave. "It isn't Pierre, my lady," she said. "It's—er—well; well, the fact is, my lady, his little lordship hasn't come in yet, and as it's long past seven o'clock and a chilly night, I said, when the maid told me, that you ought to know at once."

Lady Deramore looked quite incredulous. "Hasn't come in yet? Nonsense! You must have been misinformed. The nurse is a most careful person, and never keeps him out after sunset. She always, I know, makes a point of his being in by four o'clock."

"His little lordship's rooms are empty, and James says that he's not admitted him and the nurse," said Mrs. Comfort, quietly, but with an anxious ring in her voice. "And he tells me that they went out soon after three o'clock, his lordship in his perambulator. I ascertained all this, my lady, before troubling you."

Then Lady Deramore grew suddenly alarmed. "No doubt, then, the child's lost!" she exclaimed,

"He has been stolen out of his perambulator, and that idiotic nurse is afraid to return and tell me. Send for the police. Send for Lord Deramore. Where is he? At his club, I suppose. Send at once, at once! There's not a moment to be lost."

Lady Deramore, who was usually so dignified and so calm, broke into hysterical weeping. She was unnerved and helpless in the face of this sudden terror.

Mrs. Comfort, although quieter and more self-possessed, took a very grave view of the case. In common with old nurse and the other servants at Sunnymeadow, she had never either liked or trusted Rhoda Grange, and now she was ready to suspect the worst of her. She tried to cheer her lady with words of hope, but her own heart failed her. Then she rang the bell and sent a servant to fetch Lord Deramore.

They hunted high and they hunted low for the missing little lord.

All that could be done was done. The police made every possible inquiry and were untiring in their efforts. And in addition to this, many private persons, excited by the enormous reward offered for the recovery of the missing child, pursued a vigilant search.

Descriptions of little Lord Carnegie appeared daily in the agony columns of all the best-known and the least-known newspapers, and each description was accompanied by the advertisement of a reward that was simply magnificent in its colossal proportions.

The story of the mysterious disappearance of Lady Deramore's tiny son was soon well known in every English home. And many a lowlier-born baby was pressed yet closer in its mother's arms as she congratulated herself that she held her own little one in safety, and heartily pitied the bereaved mother of the little lord.

It seemed quite extraordinary and almost incredible that a whole three weeks should pass away without affording the slightest clue to the whereabouts and welfare of the lost child. Yet those three weeks did pass thus, dragging themselves by heavily and miserably for those anxious friends who longed for some word, some faint, far-off tidings at least, of their beloved little one.

Lady Deramore was nearly frantic. She adored her baby son, loving him as she had never loved and never would love any other earthly creature, expending upon him all the tenderness and affection of which her nature was capable. Worldly and selfish as she was beautiful and charming, Carol's mother had never cared greatly for the feelings and happiness of others. Their joys had not interested her; their sorrows had bored her. But the baby laughter and tears of her boy had appealed unflinchingly to her sympathies, and she could never tire of the pretty caressing ways of the little child whom the Christmas angels had brought.

The obscurity of the little one's fate filled her with horrid misgivings. She had terrible apprehensions, and her mind was haunted by a sickening fear that the innocent child had perished in

some awful way. Presently, as days lengthened into weeks and still no tidings came, she began to think he must be dead, and the sad thought quickly ripened into a conviction.

She grew weak and unnerved and suffered from a terrible depression.

"You must get her ladyship away from this place where the catastrophe has occurred; you must not let her haunt that empty nursery," the doctor who was called in to see her told Lord Deramore. "Take her abroad, to the Riviera—Italy—any bright, sunny spot, and let her have complete change for some months."

Lord Deramore was quite ready to comply with this suggestion, and Carol's mother was too weak and depressed to offer any objection. Arrangements were at once made for their immediate departure to Mentone, whither they were to be accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Blissenden. Mr. Blissenden, restless and irritable, was glad of the excuse for change of scene. The pomp and grandeur of his mansion at Malvern seemed to have lost their attraction for him. He had taken to heart his tiny grandson's loss. He could think and speak of nothing else.

And so with very heavy hearts, Baby Carol's friends turned their backs on Brighton, and it seemed to Lady Deramore at least that they had looked for the last time on the sweet, little face of the child the Christmas angels brought.



"Bythessea and Cloverlea share the same quaint old church."

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMER GOLD.

Of summer gold,
Of joys untold,
Sweet skylark, dost thou sing?
Of roses fair,
And gentle air,
And every lovely thing?

M. S. HAYCRAFT.

O the golden world !
The stir of life on every blade of grass.

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

THE high blue waves of the English Channel
break day after day and year after year upon the
rocky shore of a certain tiny south-coast village,

an almost unknown hamlet that nestles picturesquely on the edge of Robin Hood's Bay.

Bythesea is a remote and well-nigh unexplored spot, far away from all fashionable resorts, and quite beyond the touch of any railway line. It is the home of the fisher folk, whose brown-sailed smacks lie anchored in Robin Hood's Bay, a safe, natural harbor, and who for the most part dwell in oddest, quaintest tenements made of old, unseaworthy boats, inverted and pitch covered, with tiny lattice windows set in their timbered sides, and creeping plants trailing over their shining blackness.

Bythesea lies at the foot of the lofty white cliffs, and its twin village, Cloverlea, the prettiest and tiniest of English hamlets, crowns their dazzling summit, suggesting to many a distant mariner some fair seagull perched upon a rock. These two villages are connected by a rough path cut down the side of the cliff—a broad, rugged path that starts on grassy heights to finish on the yellow sands beneath. Bythesea and Cloverlea share the same quaint old English church, and are united in all things. So has it been from time immemorial with these quaint, twin hamlets of the south coast.

It was a lovely summer's evening—a golden, mellow, perfect summer's evening. A grand cricket-match between the respective elevens of Cloverlea and Bythesea was just nearing its finale on the smooth green of Cloverlea, and groups of rustics, fishermen, and agricultural laborers with

their belongings, were gathered under the giant elms, a critical, interested, and thoroughly appreciative audience, old folk and young awaiting with great excitement the impending finish of the match.

The soft, golden light of parting day lay tenderly upon the quiet, peaceful country scene. All was still with the delicious restful stillness of evening—a summer's evening. A perfume of mignonette scented the gentle breeze, hushed and drowsy bird-notes echoed through the distant woods, a far-away sheep bell tinkled now and then. The fishermen and the field laborers rested from their work and smoked their pipes beneath the greenery of the elm trees. Their children, freed from the thralldom of school, romped together among the buttercups and daisies—those innocent blossoms that are all the gold and silver these little ones need covet. A farmer's lad sauntered whistling behind his master's tawny, gentle-eyed Alderneys over the dewy meadows; a black mass against the pale, tender blue of the evening sky, the rooks flew cawing and chattering homewards. It was the best part of a summer's evening when, just between sunset and the soft, gray gloaming, between the thrush's evensong and the wondrous melody of the glorious nightingale, daylight lingers and drowsy moths flit by on downy wings—that time when

“The tumult of the day is done,
And the winds are at rest,
When the glory is all but gone
In the wonderful west.”



"It was a lovely summer's evening—a golden, mellow, perfect summer's evening."



The tide was going out and the soft rhythm of the receding waves crept up over the cliff like some distant fairy music.

"Hush! 'tis the mermaids singing," the fishermen's children whispered to each other—the rosy-cheeked, sun-tanned children who climbed the steep cliff-side with strong, bare feet, and were as surefooted as so many merry young antelopes. "The mermaids are singing good-night and fair weather to the outgoing boats," they said.

"Hurrah! hurrah for Cloverlea!"

The triumphant shout echoed over the green. The women clapped their hands, and the boys threw their caps high in the air as the victorious team shouldered their bats.

"'Tisn't often as Cloverlea beats Bythesea, lads, eh?" cried an old Bythesea fisherman, anxiously.

"Noa, noa, that be true," assented the captain of the Cloverlea cricket eleven, a brawny blacksmith with a heated countenance of peony hue.

Bythesea and Cloverlea were amicable even in their rivalries; each readily rendered to the other its dues.

"A good match and well contested," the old fisherman remarked, his rugged face relaxing into smiles. "Ay, we can show 'em how to handle a bat in these parts."

"That's true, Master Goble," returned the big blacksmith, good-humoredly. "Bythesea and Cloverlea lads be one an' all born cricketers."

"Little master from the rectory bain't here to-day, an' him's allus that keen 'bout the cricket,"

remarked the village cobbler, setting his horn spectacles more firmly on his nose and peering with small, near-sighted eyes at the captain of the Cloverlea eleven.

"'Tain't often he's absent when a match is on," said old Master Goble, refilling his pipe with care.

The big blacksmith shaded his eyes with his hand and looked across the green towards the irregular winding village road.

"Here he be. See, over there! Just gettin' down from the dog-cart," he explained.

Master Goble and the cobbler following the direction of his gaze saw a little figure come running over the green.

It was a slight little figure with a suggestion of breezy freshness about it—a dainty little figure simply clad in brown holland. It was an active little figure, too, despite a barely perceptible limp which scarcely marred the perfection of its childish grace.

And the face! Such a sweet little face it was—delicate, thoughtful, bright, with innocent baby lips and a smile as charming as fleeting April sunshine. The wonderful hazel eyes expressed a world of pure thought and gentlest feeling. Frank eyes they were too:—

"Good honest eyes; clear, upward, righteous eyes,
That look as though they saw the dim unseen,
And learnt from thence their deep compassionate
glance."

The villagers assembled beneath the great elm-

trees turned with welcoming smiles to greet the little lad. They were always ready to welcome "little master from the rectory."

The little figure sped over the smooth short grass, and quickly reached the rustic group beneath the giant elm; an eager, breathless child with flying curls and flushed cheeks.

"A good match, I hope? And oh! which won? I'm longin' to know."

It was a shrill, sweet voice, imperative, clear, winning. The speaker flung himself down upon the grass at Master Goble's feet and fanned his hot little face with his big hat.

"Cloverlea?" he repeated, when half a dozen voices replied to his eager question. "Well, that's quite right an' fair you know; for Bythesea won the last. A good game? Oh! I was sure it would be. I was thinkin' about it a great deal all the afternoon. I couldn't come before 'cos grandfather an' me have been to see the poor peoples in Crossley Workhouse."

"No cheery place to visit, sir?"

"Oh no, Master Goble, so sad, so very sad." The child's beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Cold-looking an' bare, an' like a prison. Those poor peoples! I can't tell you *how* sorry I feel for them."

"Surely, surely! Bless your kind heart."

"Grandfather an' me went to see some poor old gentlemens. They were in a dreffle, bare-lookin' room. No carpet on the floor an' it had just been washed, an' was all wet an' smelled of

nasty soap—very, very strong soap. The poor old gentlemens sat on wooden chairs with their feet hitched up on the bars to keep them out of the wet. They looked so sorrowful. I said to the matron, ‘Please, I’m sure they’d rather have a dirty floor,’ stead of feelin’ like islands—desert islands—in a big sea of soap. ‘Cos if you’ve the rheumatics in your poor old legs you like to keep dry.’ But she only laughed at me and said, ‘Dear me, sir, *they’re* all right.’ And truly I don’t think she cared. She is fat and rosy—as—as rosy as the peonies in my garden. I s’pose she is strong an’ don’t know how it feels to be old an’ have rheumatics.”

The child spoke rapidly and very earnestly, his sweet imperative voice falling clearly on the calm, still evening air. A murmur of sympathy greeted his simple words. He addressed the feeling hearts of those who feared such a dreary fate as he described.

“The workhouse be an awful place,” groaned Master Goble; “an awful place.”

“It’s made me feel very sad,” said the child, quickly. “I can’t forget it. I said to one of the old gentlemens, ‘Please don’t be unhappy. You’ll have a nice house to live in soon, a bu’ful house for all your own. God’s keepin’ it for you in heaven,’ an’ I found the verse in the Bible for him ’bout ‘In My Father’s house are many mansions,’ you know, and so he looked comforted an’ said, ‘It won’t be long now, little one, I’m thinkin’.’ an’ I said, ‘Do you feel happier now?’

an' he said, 'Yes, I feel as if the Lord had sent his messenger to me with words of hope.' He was a very nice old gentleman. When we came away I shook hands with him an' he said, 'May God bless you, my dear,' an' I said, 'Thank you for wishin' that; I shall often think about you.' So I shall."

The big blacksmith brought his heavy fist down on the trunk of a tree. "The workus is a terrible degradin' end for them as has lived respectable."

"May heaven save me from it," faltered Master Goble, lifting his rugged face to the calm evening sky, "I'd rather drive a hole in my old craft and go down to Davy Jones's locker, lads, when I ain't able to keep mysel' no more. 'Twould be a better finish."

"Aye, aye," murmured half a dozen voices, "anythin' but the workus."

"When I'm a man," said the child of Cloverlea Rectory, his sensitive, beautiful little face flushing vividly, "when I'm a man I will work and work oh, *ever* so hard, an' earn moneys, a great many moneys. Then I'll build houses for the poor old peoples what can't work, an' they shan't have to go to the workhouse any more."

"Bless you, little master, for your kind heart," murmured an old woman, her eyes filling with tears.

"Do you think I'll be a strong man, Mr. Goble, do you?" continued the child, eagerly, "a very strong man, as strong as Mr. Irons," with

an admiring glance at the muscular blacksmith. "Oh! I do hope so, 'cos then I can work awful hard."

The old fisherman looked from the slender, delicate child to the big, strong man and smiled. But there was a huskiness in his voice when he said:

"Heaven grant you may live to grow into a strong man, little master."

"An' a brave man, too. I want even more to be a brave man; as brave as Richard Cœur de Lion in the history book, an' Robinson Crusoe, an' St. George who killed the dragon."

The big blacksmith ran his fingers through his hair in a reflective fashion.

"Them parties is unbeknownst to me. The only Richard I knew was a poacher, an' a bad sort enough. He's in jail now," he said, slowly. "Eh, Polle, what is it, child?"

Polly Irons, a rosy-cheeked eight-year-old little maiden was pulling at her father's hand and endeavoring to attract his attention.

"Please there's a Richard in my school primer," she said, quickly. "A greedy boy what ate all the cake his mother sent him an' wouldn't give his mates some. Afterwards bears came an' swallowed him; an' it says in the primer as how the moral is 'Don't be greedy.'"

"That can't be the same Richard," the child from Cloverlea Rectory remarked, gravely. "Richard Cœur de Lion was a king, a very brave king. It's 'cos he was so brave that I want to be

like him. D'you think I'll grow up brave, Mr. Irons, do you?"

The big blacksmith smiled as he met the upturned, anxious gaze of the little boy.

"No fear you won't, little master. You were born that way, I'm thinking," he answered, heartily.

"Aye, aye," murmured old Goble. "You're right there, neighbor."

A flush of pleasure dyed the child's eager little face.

"Thank you, Mr. Irons," he said, in a grave, old-fashioned way. "I'm very glad you think so, 'cos you're a brave man yourself an' must know."

Mr. Irons' face grew very red, and he murmured something inarticulately. But his wife rose to the occasion.

"I allus did say as there warn't a more discernin' child on all the countryside than little master from the rectory," she cried. "An' now I repeats my words."

Old Master Goble pushed his fisherman's cap back from his brow and looked at her disapprovingly.

"Remember, ef yer please, Mrs. Irons, as how parson is allus a-tellin' we as us must guard agin a boastful sperit," he said, severely.

This reprimand would most certainly have met with a sharp retort from the glib tongue of the blacksmith's wife had not an interruption occurred at the very moment in which it was concluded.

A boy, one of the bare-legged, fleet-footed urchins of Bythesea, came running up the irregular village road and across the green. He was hot, breathless and excited. He waved his cap and shouted. As he came within earshot those who were gathered under the giant elm-trees caught what he was saying:—

“A yacht, a yacht! She’s sailin’ straight into Robin Hood’s Bay.”

A yacht—a yacht sailing into Robin Hood’s Bay! Wonderful! Incredible! The quiet folk of Bythesea and Cloverlea stared in astonishment at the bearer of such strange tidings. The oldest inhabitant present could not remember such a thing as having happened within reach of his earliest memory. They exchanged glances of sheer amazement. A youth who had been devouring a sensational penny-dreadful was heard to murmur of pirates and press-gangs. Master Goble remarked that the world wasn’t what it used to be in his young days, and he should like to know what they might expect next. The Cloverlea cobbler said he should hurry home and lock up his workshop; tools cost money, and one never knew but what these strangers were light-fingered.

“The yacht’s but just rounded Robin’s P’int,” said the messenger, sinking breathlessly upon the grass. “Old Mike bid me run an’ tell ye the moment it came in sight. He thinks as it’s but one o’ a fleet, an’ as we’re goin’ to have a French invasion.”

"Nonsense! a yacht ain't a man-o'-war. But theer, old Mike allus was a timid un," cried Master Goble, contemptuously.

"The yacht's probably got knocked about in a gale o' wind an' have put in here for repairs as bein' the nearest harbor," said the big blacksmith, who was an eminently practical person. "A steam yacht most like, an' some'at gone wrong wi' the bilers. That means work for me. I shall be off down to the shore at once."

"An' I likewise," chimed in the Cloverlea carpenter, flinging aside his bat and struggling into a shining black linen coat. "Sure enough there'll be some job in my line. 'Tis an ill wind as blows nobody good, as the old proverb has it."

Mrs. Etherington, who occupied the rather unique post of village tailoress, and whose horny fingers fashioned all the strong if ungraceful garments worn by the men and lads of Cloverlea and Bythesea, at once despatched her niece for her work-box, and herself set off for the shore.

"Make haste, Florrie, my girl," she said, as a parting admonition. "Put your best leg foremost. Them sailor men's sure to have some mendin' and patchin' as they'll be glad for me to get through for 'em, an' if you don't lose time we may do a good stroke o' work this evenin'."

Master Goble arose from his bench with an air of importance.

"I must be off an' look to things a bit," he remarked, consequentially. "The lads will never

get on down in the harbor wi'out I, the oldest fisherman what owns a boat at Bythesea."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe and strode away across the grass—a fine, rugged old figure, picturesquely garbed in seafaring blue.

The children were off already. Here was a newer excitement than marbles and touchwood. They scampered over the green towards the cliffs, their light feet scarcely pressing the tender grass. Their pace equalled that of the enchanted boys and girls who followed the Pied Piper of Hamelin; their musical young voices came echoing back upon the breeze with catches of merry laughter that sounded elfinlike, so wafted.

With one consent the elders turned and followed them. Each and all pressed seawards. Some of the more active among them ran on before the crowd.

"What's a yacht, please, Mr. Irons?" the child from the Cloverlea Rectory asked the big blacksmith, who was pulling himself into his coat in a very muscular fashion.

"A yacht? Well, little master, it's—it's—er—I should say a pleasure boat. You'd like to see it for yourself most like, eh? In *course* you would. Let me give you a lift, sir, an' we'll soon leave the rest o' the folk behind us, I can promise you."

"I think I'm rather heavy, Mr. Irons," the little boy said, gravely.

"I b'lieve you, sir; 'bout as heavy as a feather, no doubt, so I should suppose."

With much gentleness Irons lifted the slight little figure in his strong arms and set him upon his shoulder.

"There you be, sir. Quite comfortable—eh?"

The child was delighted.

"Oh yes, thank you, it's lovely!" he cried, with a merry laugh.

"Then just you hold on tight, an' we'll soon be down on the shore."

The burly blacksmith cantered over the green like some big good-natured cart-horse let out for a holiday.

The evening breeze caught the child's thick curls and tossed them playfully here and there. They were very pretty curls of sun-touched brown—that charming, uncommon brown that is freely sprinkled with burnished gold.

Breathless but delighted at this rapid, flying journey, the little fellow clung to his high perch, watching with eager eyes for the first glimpse of the wonderful strange boat that must soon be within sight.

Well ahead of the rest of the villagers Irons swung down the rough cliff road, a stalwart, active figure, whose pace was scarcely moderated by the light burden it bore. Suddenly he turned a sharp angle in the path, and there at their feet, not twenty yards beneath, lay tiny, picturesque Robin Hood's Bay.

It was a pretty sight this blue bay, with quaint boat-houses nestling on its sandy shores, and white wavelets breaking against the sharp, sea-

weed-covered rocks of Robin's Point. A soft, golden light—the afterglow of departed sunset—lingering tenderly, mellowed and beautified the quiet scene and just touched the broad, white sails of a dainty yacht that came dancing in like some beautiful bird homeward bound.

A cry of delighted admiration broke from the lips of the child of Cloverlea Rectory.

“Oh, how pretty, how *very* pretty!” he exclaimed. “It’s like a fairy boat or—or a bu’ful white swan, with wide, great wings, gliding over the water.”

CHAPTER VII.

WHITE WINGS.

White wings, they never grow weary,
They carry me cheerily over the sea.

WHITE WINGS.

O swift, white bird of the dancing wave,
Blithe bird of the breezy blue;
By sea-mew's wild nest and mermaid's cave
Let your broad wings bear me true.

A SEASIDE SONG.

THE dainty, white-winged yacht danced over the blue waters of Robin Hood's Bay and ran into the tiny harbor of Bythesea as straight as an arrow from a bow.

The harbor was crowded with eager, curious village folk, big brown-faced fishermen in sea-faring blue, picturesque women who in lieu of hats or bonnets wore colored kerchiefs tied over their heads, bare-legged, rosy-cheeked children, field laborers in old-fashioned smock-frocks. All Bythesea and Cloverlea, too, had turned out to see the strange boat.

The skipper came off at once. He was smart and sharp, and spoke broken English with extreme rapidity and decision.

He explained to Master Goble, who, as the old-

est fisherman there, was pushed forward by his neighbors to represent Bythesea, that the *Bluebell* had been caught in a gale of wind on the previous day, and had been considerably knocked about. He had put into Robin Hood's Bay as the nearest harbor, and the craft could not proceed with any safety until her injuries, which were beyond the patching of the ship's carpenter, had been attended to.

The big blacksmith of Cloverlea was hereupon produced, and, having assured the skipper of his ability, was at once taken by him on board that he might examine the damage done.

The child from Cloverlea Rectory went on board, too; Irons took him with him. The skipper made no objection. The skipper appeared to be a very amiable and voluble Frenchman. He was clever, too, in managing to make Irons understand him, for he knew very little English, and the big blacksmith had never before heard French spoken.

The skipper and Irons went down below to examine the yacht's injuries, and the child from Cloverlea Rectory was left on deck. There was no one else on deck; the smart sailors who manned the yacht had disappeared, and the craft might have been deserted, so quiet and empty did it seem. The eager, curious crowd on the landing-stage, too, had dispersed. Bythesea and Cloverlea folk were "early to bed and early to rise." Not even the novelty of this strange vessel that had suddenly sailed into their midst could keep them about late. When eight strokes rang out from

the tower of the little church of the cliff they bade each other good-night, and went home to supper and to bed. Only half a dozen fishers, who were going out in their brown-sailed smacks for a night's work, remained on the landing-stage, and these were at the farther end busied in seeing to their nets. So the little boy on the deck of the *Bluebell* was really alone.

It was growing quite dark. Soft gray shadows crept up over Robin Hood's Bay and veiled the blue of the placid waters. The distant sea-line grew indistinct, invisible. One after another the brown-sailed fishing smacks put out for the night. A lad in one of them was singing. He had a pleasant voice and clear; his song floated back upon the evening breeze. It sounded far away, and was presently hushed as the boat plowed out over the little proudly-swelling waves and was lost in the shadows of approaching night.

The child from Cloverlea Rectory sat upon a big coil of rope that lay on the deck of the *Bluebell* and gazed with pensive, earnest eyes upon the quiet scene. He did not feel lonely sitting there by himself in the deepening twilight; he was used to being alone.

His childish brain was full of wonderful thoughts—the wonderful thoughts that only little people enjoy, the thoughts that belong to those happy, innocent days when Fairy Fancy's sway is undisputed by Giant Know-All.

Presently bright specks of ruddy light peeped out here and there from the tiny windows of the

boat-houses of Bythesea, and at about the same time the broad beacon light on the crest of the cliff above shone forth brilliantly.

Night was coming, and the child on the deck of the *Bluebell* raised his little, thoughtful face to the calm, cloudless sky and saw his favorite star, the beautiful evening star, gleaming out brightly yet tenderly far, far above the quiet gray world and the tiny twinkling village lights.

He loved the evening star, and had always loved it, ever since he could remember anything. When he was quite a little fellow, scarcely more than a baby, he used to ask his nurse to leave the window curtain undrawn when she put him to bed, so that he could watch "his star" as he lay in his cot. He dreamed of it and thought of it in his childish way—his old-fashioned way, for he certainly was an old-fashioned child—and often he would speak to it as though that wonderful, beautiful star was a living creature, who loved and understood him.

Now, as he sat alone on the deck of this strange but charming yacht, a very small, solitary figure in the gloaming, he was glad to see his star.

"Have you come to keep me comp'ny, dear star?" he said, softly, as he lifted his earnest eyes to the gleaming, beautiful light; "I'm *very* glad, I'm always glad to see you, my star. I like to think you're a kind eye lookin' down upon me from heaven. I wonder," he added, thoughtfully, "if 'tis an angel's eye."

He rested his chin upon his little hand and watched the star very intently.

"P'raps if I keep lookin' an' lookin' *very* hard I'll see the angel—the bu'ful star-angel," he murmured.

Something rustled near him. He turned his head sharply.

Not half-a-dozen yards away stood a slim, graceful figure in a white dress. The face was averted, but the wondering child noted the daintily poised head and the soft, golden hair, and the delicate, almost ethereal, beauty of this strange apparition appealed keenly to his imaginative mind.

"It's my star-angel come down to see me, my dear, bu'ful star-angel," he breathed rather than said.

He sprang to his feet and went up to the white figure and touched its white dress almost timidly.

"I'm so 'lighted to see you," he said in a glad, low voice. "It's awf'ly kind of you to come, dear star-angel; you knowed how much I wanted you, I 'spect. Have you always heard me talkin' to you, please? I hoped so, but my nurse said that was only a child's fancy."

The figure turned quickly, and a beautiful woman's face looked down in startled amazement upon the slight childish figure.

"Where did you spring from? What are you, some sea-sprite?" cried a musical voice that sounded half frightened, half amused, "Oh! how you alarmed me, springing out upon me like that."

"Have you only just come down from the star—my star?" asked the child. "I'm sorry I startled you; but I was so glad to see you. I've

never seen an angel before 'cept in the picture in grandfather's study, an' that angel isn't nearly as pretty as you. Did you leave your wings in heaven, please? I s'pose you thought you did not want them down here?"

"What *are* you talking about, you oddest of odd children? Where have you sprung from?"

The lady broke into a peal of silvery laughter. But the little boy looked very grave.

"I've come from Cloverlea Rectory," he said, "an' I thought you was an angel—my star-angel that I've always wanted to see. Aren't you an angel, please?"

His beautiful hazel eyes grew very anxious, and his baby mouth quivered. It was dawning upon him that here after all was no welcome star-angel but only a lovely lady who could do nothing but laugh at him.

Teardrops gleamed on his long, dark eyelashes. He gave a very plaintive little sigh.

"You're so bu'ful," he faltered, "an'—an' all dressed in white. I thought you must be an angel. Truly I thought so."

The strange lady left off laughing, and her beautiful face grew very gentle as she looked at him.

"Dear little boy," she said, softly, "that was a pretty fancy and I'm sorry I must dispel it. No, I'm not an angel—not in the least. Only a woman, in fact."

But somehow the child almost forgot his disappointment when she knelt down on the deck and took him into her arms and kissed him. She was

such a beautiful lady and so kind. He thought, in his simple way, that no angel could be kinder or more beautiful.

"Thank you," he said, in his funny, old-fashioned way; "you are very good to me, lovely lady, an' I'm not *much* 'spointed now that you're not my star angel."

"But where did you come from? How did you get on board, you funny little thing?" she asked, as she withdrew her arms from the slight, childish figure and stood up, a tall, graceful lady, with a lovely, laughing face. "I really believe you're a fairy sprite after all. Come out of the shadow. Come here and let me look at you."

"I'm only a little boy, an' I came here with Mr. Irons. He's a blacksmith an' he's come to look at the holes that the rough sea made in the yacht. He's very clever an' can mend ships bu'ful. He mended Master Goble's ship—his little fishin' boat—an' it never broke again."

"Talented person! And is he—no, surely not!—your father?"

"No," said the child. "My father's gone away to heaven. I live with grandfather at Cloverlea Rectory. Oh! listen; the clock's chiming the half-hour. I must go; it's past my bedtime d'you know, an' poor grandfather will think I'm losted. I shall have to run all the way home."

"Where is your home?"

"Upon the cliff at Cloverlea. Good-night, lovely lady."

"Stay a moment, child. Will you come down

here again to-morrow and see me? Our yacht may be kept here for several days. I shall be very dull in this quiet place. Will you come and talk to me?"

"I'd like to," said the child. "You're the loveliest lady I've ever seen," he added, naïvely. "Truly I can't make up my mind that you're not the angel—the star angel—after all, only you've no wings."

"But my yacht has wings. *Bluebell's* white wings are very swift. They carry me quickly where I would go, first here, and then there, far and near, over this big world."

"Is the *Bluebell* a fairy boat?" asked the child, in hushed tones.

"Fanciful little creature! Well, I think not. The fairies won't have any dealings with me."

"Don't they love you?"

The lovely lady shook her golden head and laughed.

"They love little children," said the child of Cloverlea Rectory, simply. "I know that. They come an' talk to me in my dreams. They are very pretty an' have gentle, soft voices. It makes me happy to see them."

"Funny, old-fashioned little boy! What! you must go! Good-night, then. Will you give me another kiss? Thank you. Your mother must love you very much, doesn't she, my dear?"

There was a wistful ring in the beautiful lady's clear high-bred voice, a yearning look in the blue eyes that scanned the child's pretty innocent face.

"Yes, I am sure your mother loves you," she said.

"I don't know," the little boy answered. "My mother doesn't live here with grandfather an' me, she lives in heaven. I never saw her; I was only a little baby when the angels took her away. Often, oh, so often! I wish the angels hadn't tookened her, 'cos I would so love to have a dear, bu'ful mother, like other little children's got.

"Yes. Yes, of course you would," the lovely lady said quickly, and he saw that there were tears shining in her eyes. "And—she—ah! what she has missed. Listen, little one, there's some one calling."

"Master Carol! Master Carol!"

A man's strong voice rang through the twilight and echoed over the still waters of Robin Hood's Bay.

"It's Mr. Irons; he's calling me I must go. Good-night, lovely lady," said the child.

The lady did not seem to hear his words. Her face had become quite white. She pressed her hand to her side.

"What did he call you?" she asked. "What name did he say?"

"Only Carol," said the child, not observing her emotion. "Carol, that's what everybody calls me, 'cos it's a Christmas name, an' I comed at Chris'mas. Good-night, good-night. Yes, Mr. Irons, here I am."

The lady held out her hands as though to detain him, but the child did not notice her move-

ment. He sprang away through the deepening darkness, a slender, sprite-like little figure, and was gone.

Presently, a tall handsome man in blue serge and a peaked cap came strolling along the deck, a cigar between his lips.

The lady was still standing where Carol had left her. Her beautiful face was as white as her gown, but it was now almost dark and her companion could not see this.

"Fine evening," he said, carelessly, as he flung the end of his cigar into the sea.

For a moment she did not speak. Then she said in a low, strained voice, quite unlike her usual light and often bored tones—

"Did you see that child?"

"What child?" he asked, in some surprise. "Oh! the boy with the big blacksmith. Yes; pretty little chap. Awfully interested in the yacht. Never saw a yacht before. Nice manners. His grandfather's the parson here, so 'the village blacksmith' informs me."

"I know, I have been talking to him. Philip, his name is Carol."

"Ah—er! Yes? Well, I'm sorry, Celia. Of course the coincidence is—er—upsetting to you. But you mustn't let it bother you, you know."

"He is just about the age my—that child would be. He must be about six years old."

"Celia, you don't mean to say—? My dear, you're tired, unnerved. You mustn't encourage such fancies, though. They're bad for you. Come

down and have some dinner. We are to be regaled with fresh fish from Robin Hood's Bay; whiting, I fancy. Gustave's been patronizing the village folk largely."

He took her hand and drew it through his arm and led her away.

"My poor Celia," he said, gently, "I'm awfully sorry. You look quite done up. Bother the yacht! It needn't have run us into this stupid hole of a place. I foresee that we shall all be bored to extinction. I understand the repairs can't be finished in less than a week. Really an awful nuisance. And what is one to do with all these people one has on board I should like to know?"

She did not seem to hear him.

"I expect the Bishop will have an urgent telegram summoning him to town to-morrow morning," he continued, laughing, "and I'm sure I don't blame him. And Rutherford won't stop, you'll see. I wish the Blaines would take themselves off, too, but I fear we shall have no such luck; and Fordyce will stop as long as the Blaines do."

"I think I will go to my cabin," the lady said, quietly. "I don't feel disposed to be bored by the wearisome prattle of those people to-night. You can say I have a headache." She withdrew her hand from her husband's arm and went quietly away.

"Where's Lady Deramore?" cried a smart looking girl in blue-and-white yachting costume, as the gentleman entered a luxuriously furnished saloon in which were assembled half-a-dozen well-

dressed people. "We're all keen on a plan for exploring this desert island to-morrow. We want to have a picnic. Don't you think it would be jolly?"

"Charming! I see you possess the amiable gift of adapting yourself to existing circumstances, Miss Blaine. Lady Donnington, my wife hopes every one will excuse her to-night. She's got a headache. Fact is I fear the little *contretemps* which we've all just experienced has upset her nerves a bit."

"So sorry, dear Lord Deramore," murmured the old lady, as she took his proffered arm, "pray tell her so. Dear me, how hungry yachting makes one. Really it's extraordinary."

"As hungry as a hunter," cried the lively Miss Blaine, with a loud laugh.

"And we are to criticise the fish of Robin Hood's Bay," said their host. "Gustave has been purchasing shoals. I saw him having a grand argument with some brown-faced fishermen who seemed to be greatly puzzled by his voluble French tongue."

A merry party gathered round the dinner-table. Everybody seemed in a good humor and ready to make a joke out of the annoyance caused by this sudden interruption to their pleasant summer cruise. They even appeared to forget that in all probability the *contretemps* would deprive them of a long anticipated "Cowes Week." In fact, their amiability was something to be admired; their host felt grateful to them. He was rather preoccupied himself, singularly so, for he was not

as a rule a thoughtful person. The fact was his wife's agitation and her words had impressed him more than he cared to show. He tried to throw off the impression, but tried in vain.

Alone in her cabin Carol's beautiful lady paced restlessly up and down, too restless to sit still. Presently she unlocked her dressing-case and took out from it a small square morocco case. She pressed the snap that fastened it and the case sprang open, revealing an exquisitely painted miniature of a little child.

Lady Deramore's tears fell fast as she gazed upon the pictured face of the child whom the Christmas angels had brought her more than six years ago—the child she had lost ere he learned to call her mother.

"There is a likeness," she exclaimed, "I am sure there is a likeness. We will cause inquiries to be made, and who knows, who knows?" An eager flush dyed her pale cheeks.

The evening sped by as a summer evening will, and she sat alone in the gray dusk, not caring to ring for lights, and thought of the little slender boy with an innocent baby face and hazel eyes who had called her his "star-angel."

The old sense of sorrow and of loss that had slumbered in her heart for nearly four years had been all awakened by the sight of a childish face, the sound of a childish voice.

"Oh! if I only dared to hope," she said. "And I have a feeling—a *conviction*. Surely, surely a mother must recognize her own child!"



"It was a garden of old, sweet memories."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD-FASHIONED CHILD.

O Child! O new-born denizen
Of life's great city ; on thy head
The glory of the morn is shed
Like a celestial Benison.

The land of song within thee lies,
Watered by living springs ;
The lids of Fancy's sleepless eyes
Are gates into that Paradise ;
Holy thoughts like stars arise,
Its clouds are angels' wings.

LONGFELLOW.

CLOVERLEA RECTORY, as quaint an ancient tene-

ment as Old Time has passed down to this generation, was a gray and somber, perhaps a rather "eerie," house.

It was so *very* ancient. The narrow, small-paned windows looked odd and out-of-date, the big chimneys shook when the sea wind blew high. Creeping plants covered a thousand dilapidations.

But it was a picturesque dwelling, and the old clergyman who had lived in it for more than forty years and the little child who could remember no other home, loved it well enough.

And there was a delicious garden, one of those fine old gardens that no wealth can make—a garden that was the outcome of years of culture and care.

The smooth lawns and the quaintly-cut yew hedges and the sundial had delighted the children of days long since passed away, and the little feet of Cavalier boys and girls had tripped over the quaint bowling green, that shady spot in which Carol loved to sit with his book—a little thoughtful child among the flowers. It was a garden of old, sweet memories; the very flowers, those dear old-fashioned flowers, seemed to breathe a fragrance of long ago. The pink and white hollyhocks, the rich brown wall-flowers, the dainty primroses, the sky-blue forget-me-nots, the gorgeous, glorious roses, each in their season had a story of bygone days to breathe out upon the soft, pure air. The dreamy, solitary child of Cloverlea Rectory knew those stories well.

He was a very dreamy child, and his dreams

kept him quite happy. At evening-time he would sit upon the broken, tumble-down stone parapet of the little terrace thinking, thinking, oh! such wonderful thoughts. Then his vivid imagination would conjure up the pretty forms and faces, the quaint old-fashioned dresses of those children of long ago who had once lived and played in the now quiet precincts of Cloverlea Rectory. He could see them all, those merry boys and girls, chasing each other over the smooth lawns, and playing at hide-and-seek among the tall, straight poplar trees. He could hear their musical laughter and their happy voices, and a smile would break over his pensive little face. Yes, his fancies made him very happy. He was never solitary, albeit much alone; these dream-children kept him company.

And then there was Rosette. Rosette was only a dog, but *such* a dog. She was as sharp as a needle and as playful as a kitten. She was highly accomplished too. The rector had bought her from a red-faced personage, who supported himself by exhibiting the antics of a troop of performing dogs. The red-faced personage had once visited Cloverlea *en route* for some more important place. He had given an entertainment in the village, and the rectory child had begged that he might witness it. So the rector and Carol had gone together to the show, with the result that they returned home an hour later, the rector lighter in pocket by the sum of ten pounds, and Carol the delighted and proud little owner of as

fine a clipped black poodle as ever jumped through a hoop or turned somersaults. Rosette's bewitching ways, her undoubted accomplishments, and her pathetic, appealing black eyes had fairly fascinated both the old clergyman and his young companion.

Nor did they regret their bargain. Rosette was a delightful and sympathetic creature, and she soon adored the child, whose constant companion she was. She would obey his slightest word or gesture. She was almost always with him. When he was for a little while out of her sight she became anxious and unhappy, and would accept no comfort. In fact, she loved the little fellow as only a dog *can*.

And Carol? Well, he thought there was not, never had been, and never would be, another such black poodle as his beloved Rosette.

The child and the dog were inseparables. There were a good many animals at Cloverlea Rectory, for the rector had a fancy for farming. Carol had a pet name for each creature, and knew and loved every one of them, from Dobbin, the big, dappled gray cart horse, who always whinnied with pleasure and poked out his big nose in search of the never-failing lump of sugar when he saw the child coming, to the little curly-tailed black pigs that scampered away and squeaked and wouldn't make friends.

There were Daisy, Buttercup, and Marsh Marigold, the three tawny, soft-eyed Alderney cows. And there was Bob, the rector's smart, high-step-

ping cob, and Dandy, the sleek and well-groomed donkey. Then there were the dogs, Rover and Trim, the spaniels, and Rough, the big sheep-dog, who lived in the stable-yard, and tugged at their chains and barked with glee when they saw a tiny figure in brown holland climbing the high five-barred gate.

The cats too. There were four of them, old pussy and her three children, whom Carol had named Pussy-cat-mew, Puss-in-boots, and Hi-diddle-diddle, after three well-known fairy-tale pussies. Carol took them food every day, and when they heard his light footfall and clear childish voice they would look up as though to say "Who's that calling so sweet?" When they had lapped up all the bread and milk their little master had brought, Puss-in-boots would curl herself up in the china bowl and slumber sweetly. It was a queer cat's cradle. Carol, who feared the pussies might feel dull, often climbed into the loft where they lived and read them stories from his favorite books.

It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the creatures belonging to Cloverlea Rectory, the creatures that Carol loved. There were pigeons and tame rabbits, and a jackdaw. There was a little brown, bushy squirrel that scampered freely everywhere and never left the rectory precincts nor came to any harm. There was a terrible-looking bull-dog that belonged to Giles, the coachman, and terrified everybody excepting Carol, who was on excellent terms with him. On the lawn resided a light-heeled sharp-horned goat.

Some quiet sheep lived down in the fields. As for the wild birds, they made a sort of birds' paradise of the secluded and beautiful rectory garden. In glad spring-time their sweet notes fell in a perfect flood of song over green lawns and shaded walks.

"They know we feed them when the snow is on the ground, and they sing to thank us," Carol said. "It's very nice of them, I think, very nice an' grateful."

This was the child's quiet country home, his simple, secluded home.

Here he had lived ever since he could remember, a free child of nature with but slight instruction in book knowledge, with none in worldly wisdom, growing in the pure, fresh air like some beautiful young plant.

He was only a very little fellow, but six years old, and that quiet student, the rector of Cloverlea, did not believe in cramming young minds with knowledge too heavy for them to carry. He believed rather in the influences of sweet nature, of lovely and pure surroundings, of an example better than precept. With our poet of the lake district he could have said of nature—

"She has a world of ready wealth
Our minds and hearts to bless,
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.
One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

And the child of Cloverlea Rectory was quick to learn. His was a vivid intelligence, a heart quick to understand, to sympathize ; imaginative, responsive, he was one of those who

“See in every hedgerow
Marks of angels’ feet,
Epics in each pebble
Underneath our feet.”

Nor was he but a dreamy little student of nature. His sympathies were wide and his heart expansive. In the villages of Cloverlea and Bythesea he had many friends. Young and old alike loved the gentle, bright-faced child, who was ever interested in them, joyful for their happiness and prosperity, sad when they were sorry. They could but love him, this true little friend of theirs, and small wonder was it that in every cottage home his presence brightened, he was as welcome as the golden sunshine that gladdens spring.

On lovely summer evenings when the sun was sinking in a glorious, rosy west, and tiny blue wavelets were breaking with a soft plash, plash upon the sandy shore of Robin Hood’s Bay, he would sit on the beach with his fisher friends and tell them tales as they mended their nets.

Wonderful tales they were, of strange lands far away across the sea, of lovely mermaids, of treasure caves lined with pearl and decked with costliest jewels.

Quaint stories all of them, culled from the odd old books that lined the bookshelves of the rector’s library. But the simple village folk were

well pleased with them, and little Carol's shrill, sweet voice fell upon attentive ears. His narratives were appreciated.

So there on the sands he might have been seen evening after evening, the center of a little group of busy fisher folk, whose brown hands moved deftly over their coarse nets as they listened to these tales of long ago.

For Sunday evenings was the best story of all reserved—the Bible story of the miraculous draught of fishes. The story of how the Lord of heaven and earth condescended to speak with those humble fishers on the lake of Gennesaret, how he entered into one of their ships, how he wondrously blessed their labor.

The fishers of Bythesea could never tire of that story; they thought it the most beautiful in the Bible. It appealed vividly to their homely intelligence. Those fishermen on the lake of Gennesaret had been of like trade as themselves, just humble working men. And the Lord had cared for them, had blessed them. They liked to remember that.

Carol read to them too, very often, of how Christ had stilled the tempest, and how those divine words, "Peace; be still," had risen above the tumult of the storm.

"The wind ceased and there was a great calm," repeated the child, softly, the evening light falling upon his pretty, earnest little face.

"Aye, aye, a great calm," said old Master Goble, a smile breaking over his rugged, weatherbeaten

countenance as he listened. "A great calm. I minds that tale when I be far out at sea, no land within sight, on a rough night. And there's been times when I've fancied as I could hear the Lord's voice, sounding over the waters, 'Peace; be still.' Aye, I seemed to hear it, and it comforted me more'n words can tell."

"Grandfather says that the Lord Jesus is always with us, both in storm and in calm." And the child of Cloverlea Rectory lifted his innocent face trustfully to the quiet, beautiful evening sky, "Quite as much with us as he was with his disciples when he lived upon earth."

Very simple and unquestioning was Carol's faith. It almost seemed as though his clear eyes saw and understood things not revealed to the knowledge of the wise and learned. And truly, "A pure heart penetrateth heaven."

An old-fashioned child some called him, this gentle, thoughtful little one, whose poor friends loved him so dearly. Old-fashioned! Perhaps so; but very sweet and endearing, very lovable.

Within the fragile frame of the little child of Cloverlea Rectory dwelt a pure and generous spirit, a heart filled with love and goodwill towards all the world. It seemed as though some angel hand directed his footsteps, some angel voice whispered heavenly messages in his willing ear.

An old-fashioned child! But his little presence brought joy and gladness to many a humble heart and made all the brightness of one quiet country home.



"The balmy, flower-scented summer's evening was pleasant."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

There is no light in earth or heaven
But the cold light of the stars ;
And the first watch of the night is given
To the red planet, Mars.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

It was nearly dark, as dark as a cloudless summer's night may be. The church clock at Cloverlea had just chimed the half hour after eight ; the busy rooks who had been making such a fuss all through the long, sultry, sunny day had ceased their chatter and gone to roost in the rectory elms. From the narrow latticed windows of the rectory house glimmered soft lamplight.

The rector of Cloverlea and Bythesea sat in the roomy, creeper-covered porch, an open book upon his knees. Mr. Southesk was not even attempting to read, it was too dark to distinguish the letter-press. But the balmy, flower-scented summer's evening was pleasant, and he was well content to watch the deep gray shadows of night stealing up over lawn and meadow, and the stars shining out one by one in the clear, cloudless, sapphire sky.

It was a drowsy, fragrant summer world upon which he gazed. The night was fair and not a cloudlet marred the serenity of the clear vault of heaven. Brightly and tenderly those brilliant white lights that are called "the forget-me-nots of the angels" gleamed in the far-off blue.

The old clergyman enjoyed the quiet beauty of the twilight scene intensely. This student of books, who had taken high honors at the university, and had in his day filled the high office of Bampton Lecturer, was a student of nature too. He loved her in all her moods, and found a never-failing source of interest, an ever-varying pleasure, in her changing aspects and many different phases.

Now he sat alone in the porch, thinking, dreaming, his mind far, far away in the regions of long ago.

A smile was on his lips—a tender, quiet smile, the peaceful smile of old age—that smile that reminds those who see it of winter sunshine, faint and sweet. It seemed ~~that~~ his thoughts were

pleasant thoughts. So they might well be, for he could look back upon a life of devoted service, of earnest work, the life of a Christian and a gentleman.

Clever, cultivated, and refined, he had elected to devote all his talents, his strength and his energy to the humble fisher folk who had been his first charge. They begged him to stay among them, and knowing their need of him he stayed. Many a preferment had he declined rather than desert Cloverlea and Bythesea. And he was very dear to them, these poor people whose earnest pastor and true friend he was. Each and all deferred every question of importance to "Parson," abiding contentedly by his decision.

Mr. Southesk was not one of those who, having put their hand to the plow, look back. He was well content with the lot he had freely selected, well content to stay in quiet Cloverlea—that tiny village on a cliff where seldom came strangers save the swift-winged seagulls that put into Robin Hood's Bay when storms were brewing.

His reverie was suddenly interrupted. The house door was opened quickly, and a woman came into the porch. She was a young woman with a pale, reserved face and dark eyes. Her tall figure was plainly clad in a homely linsey gown, and she wore a big apron of mauve cotton.

"It's very late, sir," she said; "getting on for nine o'clock. The child should be in."

She looked anxious, and there was a nervous ring in her voice.

But her evident anxiety found no reflection in the quiet tones that answered her.

"Carol is quite safe; I have no doubt of that. The little one is among friends. I left him on the village green, as he was anxious to learn the result of the cricket match, and most probably he afterwards went down to Bythesea with some of his fisher friends."

"They should know better than to keep him out so late," the woman said, quickly. "I wonder at them!" Her dark eyes flashed indignantly through the soft dusk.

Mr. Southesk smiled.

"You always worry yourself about the child, Rhoda," he said. "I can't understand it. Surely you must know that he is safe in this quiet place and surrounded by friends."

"I know, sir, I know," she responded, humbly. "But oh! he's so dear to me."

"And to me," said the rector, quietly.

"Yes, yes, as if I could doubt that. But, sir, you, you don't know—leastways," she added, hurriedly, "it comes natural to a woman to be anxious like."

A light, quick footfall sounded on the gravel drive.

"Ah! here he is," she cried, in a tone of relief.

The next moment a slight little figure ran into the rector's outstretched arms.

"Were you frightened, grandfather, dear? Did you think I was losted?"

"We were beginning to wonder about you, little runaway. Where have you been?"

"Yes, I'm late, I know. But oh, I've had such a *'licious* time! We went on the yacht, you know, Mr. Irons an' me. It's anchored in the bay, an' it's called the *Bluebell*. It danced over the waves like a white swan. I said to the skipper, 'Your boat is bu'ful,' an' he said, 'I know not ze English, little monsieur.' He was French, and talked fast an' waved his hands about, so. Mr. Irons understood him, I think. He seemed to. I thoughted the lovely lady was an angel, my star-angel, but she said no, she was only a woman; 'sides she had no wings, though her dress was all white."

Carol stopped breathlessly, but the next moment he went on again.

"Such a lovely lady," he exclaimed, enthusiastically, "just like the angel in the picture in your study, grandfather dear, very kind, too, an' gentle."

The child's face was flushed. His hazel eyes shone with eager light.

"My dear, what are you talking about?" cried Mr. Southesk, in astonishment.

"If you please, your reverence," said a big voice from the darkness, "I must ax your pardon for keepin' little master out so late. But theer's a strange yacht belonging to the quality put into the harbor for repairs, an' I took the liberty o' takin' him on board 'long o' I. He were that eager to go, your reverence."

The speaker was the blacksmith of Cloverlea. He stood, cap in hand, upon the threshold of the porch—a tall, sturdy figure, magnified by the half light.

“You ought to know better than to keep the little gentleman out to such an hour as this,” said the woman called Rhoda, sharply. “I am surprised at you, John Irons.”

“Mr. Irons was very kind, Rhoda, truly he was!” eagerly interposed the child.

Mr. Southesk smiled and patted Carol’s curly head that rested confidingly against his shoulder.

“All right, Irons, all right,” he said, pleasantly. “The little one has enjoyed his outing I’m sure, and he was safe in your hands.”

Irons’ broad countenance relaxed into a pleased smile at these gracious words.

“It were well meant on my part, your reverence,” he said. “An’ the yacht be a pretty soight.”

“With big sails like white wings, grandfather dear.”

“A smart craft as ever put into Robin Hood’s Bay, your reverence. Got knocked about in yester’s gale o’ wind. I’m to have the repairin’ on’t, your reverence.” Irons’ face expressed intense satisfaction.

“I’m glad to hear that,” the rector said, in his kind, genial way—the way that had done so much to endear him to all Cloverlea and Bythesea besides. “And who is the owner? D’you know?”

"'Tis a titled gent, your reverence. The name? Well, there now, *wot* is it?" The blacksmith rubbed his forehead reflectively. "Ah! I has it. 'Twas told me by the furrin skipper. *Der-amore*, your reverence, that's it, *Lord Deramore*."

Rhoda clapped her hand to heart and sprang back with a cry—a cry of anguish and terror.

"What is it? What has happened?" cried Mr. Southesk, greatly startled.

"Feel faint, lass?" queried Irons. "Try burnt feathers; my missus sets a store by 'em. Or perhaps some vinegar."

"Are you ill, Rhoda, poor Rhoda?" cried Carol, running to her.

"No, no," she said, quickly, and tried to laugh. "Twas only—a—a cockchafer. It buzzed in my face and startled me. I beg your pardon, sir," she added, humbly, as she turned to the rector. "Please to excuse my foolishness."

"All right, all right," he said, kindly; "but I did not know you minded these harmless winged insects, Rhoda. I had no idea you were nervous about them."

"Not usually, not usually," she answered, quickly; "but this one—it—it took me by surprise."

She was very pale and her lips quivered painfully. She seemed to be extraordinarily distressed by the trifling incident. The porch was dark and the rector could not see her face. If he could he must have been at once startled and perplexed by the expression of anguish it wore.

"How cold your hands are, Rhoda! I'll try to warm them," cried Carol, rubbing them between his own.

"Come away, darling," she whispered, putting her arms round his slight little figure. "Come away; 'tis late, an' you should be in bed."

"But I want to stay for a little while with grandfather, Rhoda. Just a little while. Oh, please let me stay."

"Yes," interposed the rector, "let the child stay."

She turned away then and went silently into the house and closed the doors. If they could have seen her face they would have read upon it the terror of a hunted animal mixed with a passionate defiance indescribable; but the darkness hid her, and her emotion was unsuspected.

"They're all alike that way. The women-folk," said the village blacksmith, philosophically, "can't abear them flyin' buzzin' insects. Seems to touch up their nerveses like; my missus be just the same. Good-night, your reverence. Good-night, little master."

"Good-evening to you, Irons."

"Good-by, Mr. Irons, good-by. Thank you so much for takin' me to see the yacht. It was so kind of you. I'm not a bit tired an' I'm sure Rhoda won't be angry with you long, so please don't feel sad 'bout what she said. Good-by."

"Good-by, little master."

The big blacksmith tramped away into the

darkness, and the old rector and the little child were left together.

Carol climbed on to Mr. Southesk's knee, and the clergyman put his arm about him and kissed him.

"Tired, my dear?"

"Not very tired, grandfather dear, thank you. And I like to have my little chat with you before I go to bed. We always have our little chat, don't we?"

"Of course we do. And who is your lovely lady, little one? Lady Deramore, I suppose?"

"I don't know what she's called," the child said, simply. "But she's very bu'ful. She said, 'I'm sure your mother loves you very much,' an' I told her, I don't know, for my mother don't live here, she lives in heaven.' Grandfather dear, d'you think my mother was somefin' like the lovely lady?"

"Perhaps so, Carol. I can't tell you, my child, for I never saw her."

"I wish she'd not gone away to heaven. I'd like her to live with you an' me."

"Would that make you happier, my dear?"

"I'm happy—very happy, grandfather dear. But it would be nice if I had a mother like other little children—a bu'ful mother like the lovely lady—wouldn't it?"

"Our heavenly Father gives us all we have need of, my child. He keeps from us no love, no tenderness, that might be good for us."

"Yes, I know, I know that. Is it wrong for me to wish I had a dear mother like the lovely

lady, is it? I didn't mean it *wrongly*, grandfather dear."

"No, I'm sure you didn't. I only want you to understand, my darling, that we must all be content with what God gives us. Do you see?"

Carol nodded his sunny head and a thoughtful look crept into his little face.

"I see," he said, "I see, an' one day, grandfather dear, when I go to heaven I'll have my own dear mother to love me, won't I?"

"Doubtless you will, for we shall all be perfectly happy there. This world is but a training school, my little one, the training school for heaven. Pain and sorrow, and disappointment are but the lessons we must learn, and God can give even the weakest of us strength to learn them bravely and patiently. The secret of a happy life, darling, is trust—trust in our Father—the Father who careth for the very sparrows, who clobeth the grass of the field."

Carol listened, a grave *understanding* look upon his little face.

"In heaven my leg won't ache any more," he remarked. "I'm glad of that; it's rather a tirin' leg, sometimes."

"Does it ache?" Does it hurt you much, my dear?" the rector questioned, anxiously. Carol never complained; he was not a complaining child, but Mr. Southesk had noticed lately that he limped more than he used.

"It don't hurt me much, grandfather dear," said the child, cheerfully, "an' it doesn't stop my

runnin' about. Please don't feel grave about it, grandfather dear. I think it will be better soon, p'raps it will get well when I grow older an' stronger. An' I'm better off, ever so much better off, than Mrs. Trench," he continued, eagerly, "for her poor legs haven't got any use in them, an' she can't stand up. I'm sure Mrs. Trench will be glad when it's time for her to go to heaven. She often asks me to read to her out of the Bible that part where it says 'there shall be no more pain'."

"Ah! I know. And Mrs. Trench speaks of you as her little comforter, Carol. I was very glad to hear her speak of you so, my dear. It is a happy thing when we can bring light into the darkness of the sad and suffering."

Carol's face brightened. This dear friend's rare praise was infinitely sweet to his childish heart. But Mr. Southesk looked very grave.

"I must try to take you to see a London doctor, I think. He may be able to do something for you."

"Mr. Tebbs is a very nice doctor. He never beats his horse, an' he puts bunches of green in its harness to keep off the flies in hot weather. An' 'sides, when Mrs. Brown's little baby was ill he gave her ever so many bottles of medicine for it, an' wouldn't let her pay for them."

"Yes, he's a good fellow. But I think we must see a London man—a specialist. I want my boy to grow up very strong and active."

"An' brave. That's best of all—eh, grandfather dear?"

"Yes, brave, most certainly brave."

"I will try hard. Oh! where's Rosette?"

"I don't know; but I daresay she has gone off down to Bythesea in search of you."

"She'll come home soon then. She always finds me out," said the child, brightly. "Dear, funny doggy! She's awf'ly sharp, isn't she?"

"And very devoted to you."

"Yes, we're great friends, Rosette an' me."

"You look a little pale and tired, my dear," the rector said, rather anxiously, as he scanned the pretty face that rested against his shoulder.

"Perhaps you had better go to bed."

"In a little while. But let me stay with you for just a few moments, please."

"Gladly. I'm always pleased to have my boy with me."

"Are you glad you found me in the snow that Christmas time, grandfather dear?"

"So glad, Carol. You have brought a great deal of joy into my life, little one."

"Tell me 'bout it again, please, if you don't mind, the story of how you found a little baby in the snow when you were comin' home from church on Christmas night long ago; how long ago, eh?"

"Five years ago next Christmas. Do you really want to hear the oft-told tale once more? Very well, then."

"Right away through, please. Begin with 'The Christmas bells were ringin'."

"The Christmas bells were ringing over the

snow, and all the white world lay in stillness to hear their sweet message."

"Yes," interrupted the child, eagerly, "I know their message, grandfather dear. 'Twas 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards men.'"

"That was it. An old message ever new and ever welcome, Carol. Well, it was night, a dark night and cold, and an old parson was plodding homewards after the evening service that he had just held in Cloverlea church. It was very, very dark, and he was quite glad when, the clouds drifting a little, he saw one bright, white star shining out in the sky—the evening star. He thought of the star of Bethlehem, and of how, at that first Christmas, long, long ago, it led the wise men to the manger-throne wherein the Holy Child, the first Christmas Child lay.

"Suddenly he stumbled against something and almost fell. Recovering himself, he looked down and saw a bundle upon the ground in the snow at his feet.

"Then a cry broke upon the still air—a child's cry.

"The old clergyman stooped closely over the bundle and saw with surprise that it was no mere heap of clothes but—"

"A baby!" cried Carol, laughing and clapping his little hands—"me!"

"A baby," repeated Mr. Southesk, a smile breaking over his fine old face—"you."

"Quite a little thing—not much more than a year old, eh?"

"A little thing with soft, fluffy hair and a beautiful infantine face. The old clergyman gazed upon it in wonder. He lifted it up in his arms, and it cooed and laughed contentedly and smiled at him—such a happy, confiding smile."

"I think it loved him already," said the child; "I like to think so."

"He thought of the first Christmas Child as he carried the baby homewards over the snow," continued the rector; "and for the sake of that Holy Child he determined he would do all he could for the helpless little one."

"So he took it home," cried Carol, quickly, "and was very, very kind to it. He told his servants to warm and feed it, an' take care of it. An' then he tried to find out who it belonged to."

"But as to this he could obtain no clue. The little baby seemed to be all alone in the world. The old parson was alone in the world, too. He had neither kith nor kin to bear him company, to be dependent on him. He was glad to have this little child—the child the Christmas angels had brought him—and he determined to keep the baby whom nobody claimed."

"So they lived happily together ever afterwards, like the peoples in a nice-endin' fairy tale," said the child.

"The old parson didn't know much about children," continued Mr. Southesk, smiling. "But he advertised for a good nurse to take care of the baby, and very shortly after the appearance

of his advertisement a superior-looking young woman presented herself as an applicant for the situation. She had read the advertisement in a daily paper, and had at once come down from London to answer it in person. Her testimonials were excellent, and she was at once engaged. The baby who was to be her charge took to her from the first. When she entered his nursery he held out his arms to her and uttered cries of delight. She seemed greatly pleased by his demonstrations of friendliness, and when the old parson saw her take the child in her arms and kiss it, he felt sure that his boy was safe with her."

"An' Rhoda's stayed with the little baby ever since, an' is never goin' to leave him. When I'm too big to have a nurse, grandfather dear, Rhoda won't go away, she'll stay an' keep house for me when I'm a man. She's promised me that. We'll always live together, won't we, grandfather dear? You an' me, and Rhoda, an', *in course*, Rosette."

Mr. Southesk smiled down upon the eager, childish face.

"I hope we may be together for some years yet, dear; I hope so. I'd like to see my boy a man—a good, brave, strong man—before I leave him. But I'm getting old, Carol, and very soon I must leave this quiet home of ours for the home my heavenly Father has prepared for me in another world than this."

Carol put his arms about the old clergyman's neck and kissed him.

"I shall ask God to let me go to heaven when you go, grandfather dear," he said, earnestly. "We'd like to go together, wouldn't we—eh? An' there's Rosette; I'll pray hard that she may come too, with us. She'd never be happy all 'lone in the world without me, I know."

"No, my dear, no. You are very young, Carol; just beginning life. It isn't your resting time yet. I want my boy to do many brave and noble things on this earth of ours; I want him to live long and well. You are a Christmas Child, Carol—at least a child who came to me at Christmas time—and I want you always to remember him, the first Christmas Child, to follow in his steps and to make the story of his boyhood your childhood's pattern."

"I'll try to 'member, grandfather dear; truly I will," cried the little fellow, quickly.

"Yes," said Mr. Southesk, "I am sure you will. And now, my dear, good-night. Listen, the church clock is striking nine. 'Tis time all young things were asleep."

"D'you know what I shall dream about to-night?"

"I'm sure I don't."

"Well, I believe of the strange boat with white wings like a bird, an' of the lovely lady."

"That's very likely, I think. Good-night, my dear."

The rector kissed his little companion tenderly, and Carol, having warmly returned his embrace, ran into the house calling for Rhoda.

She heard his sweet, shrill voice at once, and came into the hall to meet him, a smile on her usually grave face; she always had a smile for Carol.

"I'm goin' to bed now, Rhoda," said the child. "Will you come soon an' hear me say my prayers?"

"You look a bit white and tired," she said, with an anxious glance. "Here, let me carry you up, darlin', as I used when you was a little baby."

"But I'm not a baby now, you know, Rhoda. I'm gettin' quite big an' strong—six years old. Soon I'll be a man," he exclaimed, as she lifted his slight little figure in her strong arms.

"Yes, yes, I know," she answered, humoring him. "But just for to-night, love, we'll play as you're my little baby once more."

"Funny, Rhoda, but it's rather nice to be a baby for once. It's nice to be carried, you know. My leg hurts rather to-night; only don't tell grandfather 'cos it would make him sorry."

"My poor lamb!" She bent her head and kissed his little hands passionately.

"The pain's not very bad," he said, "an' I'm tryin' to bear it *goodly* an' be brave. I want very much to be brave, you know."

She made no answer but he felt a teardrop fall upon his hand.

"Are you crying?" he asked, anxiously. "Oh, *don't* cry! Why d'you cry, Rhoda?"

"I cry because I love you, my dear little one," she faltered.

"An' I love you, but that don't make me sad. You won't cry any more, will you?" he added, coaxingly.

"I'll not do a thing you don't want, darlin'."

Carol was very tired. He let his nurse undress him and lift him into his dimity-hung bed almost as though he were the little baby of whom she spoke so tenderly—the little baby she had first cared for and loved.

"Shall I stay beside you an' sing you to sleep, my dear?" she asked. "P'raps you'd like that as you're tired-like."

But he shook his head.

"No, thank you, Rhoda, I'll just lie and look at the stars. I always do that. I love the stars so much—best of all *my* star."

"Yes, you've always had a fancy for watchin' 'em. Good-night my precious." She bent and kissed him. "Is the pain better now?"

He put up his little hand and stroked her face caressingly. "Yes, it's better now, thank you, kind Rhoda, much better. Soon I think I shall fall asleep an' dream 'bout the lovely lady."

Suddenly Rhoda turned very pale.

"Is—is she very beautiful?" she faltered.

"Very bu'ful," answered the child, simply. "Just like the angel in grandfather's picture. I thoughted she was my star angel."

"Fair an' tall?"

"Yes, an' with gold hair. Such a lovely lady!"

"And what did she say to you?"

"She said, 'Doesn't your mother love you very much? I'm sure she does,' an' I said, 'I don't know 'cos my mother don't live with me. She lives in heaven.'"

"And what did she say then; tell me that?"

"I think she kissed me," said the child. "How white your face is, Rhoda? Are you tired? Poor Rhoda! I'm afraid I was heavy for you to carry upstairs," he added, anxiously.

"I could never find you heavy, my darlin'," she replied. "Good-night, my own, own boy!"

"Good-night," he answered, softly, "good-night. My star's up there lookin' at me, such a bu'ful bright light. I love to watch it. It always seems to keep me comp'ny."

Rhoda went quietly away and he was left alone.

Not alone. There was that calm, bright light up in heaven, while over the woods a nightingale was warbling and trilling with all its glad heart in its sweet, true, soaring notes.

The little child lay in his bed under the window, his curly head resting upon his arm, thinking the long, long thoughts of youth, while the nightingale warbled on and the starry sky shone serene over all.

Presently he fell asleep, and dreamed happily of a white-winged yacht and a lovely lady. It was the same lovely lady whom he had taken for his star angel, but in the dream it seemed that she was his own mother—the mother he had never beheld.

"Mother," he murmured, drowsily, as he turned upon his pillow. And Rhoda bending over him caught the softly-uttered word and started back with an impatient sigh.

But in the far-off blue, Carol's star was shining calmly, tranquilly, brightly, as though in all the wide world beneath there dwelt no faintest shadow of trouble or sorrow.



"They had taken up their abode in the rustic inn of Bythessea."

CHAPTER X.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me ;
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

LORD TENNYSON.

It was a very stormy day. A rough wind swept over the cliff from the sea and tossed the huge leafy branches of the rectory elms hither and

thither ; big gray clouds chased each other across the sky, then the rain came, and poured steadily in heavy sheets upon the low-lying meadows and the soft, fragrant brown summer mold.

The waves that broke upon the sandy shore of Robin Hood's Bay were boisterous, white-capped waves. They tossed their snowy foam upon the deck of the smart little *Bluebell* as she rose and fell upon the swelling waters.

On board the yacht Irons and his subordinates worked with a will at necessary repairs. There was nothing to impede their progress ; they and the crew were left in sole possession of the craft. The party of guests had broken up and dispersed, and the host and hostess and their servants had taken up their abode in the rustic inn of Bythesea, there to await the completion of the work that was to make the *Bluebell* seaworthy once more.

Lord Deramore hoped that the delay would be a brief one and that the yacht might get away again in the course of a week. But when his guests spoke of leaving he did not press them to remain, for he could not see how they could possibly amuse themselves in this out-of-the-world fishing hamlet ; and he felt that to entertain them was, under the circumstances, more than he could manage.

But when they had all gone and there was nothing more to arrange or carry out, and Irons and his men were in possession of the *Bluebell*, the owner of that yacht began to yawn and wonder

how he was to support life at Bythesea for a week.

"I'll tell you what," he said to Lady Deramore, "I'll tell you what. We'll just run up to town for a day or two. Of course, it will be grilling and there won't be a person left to speak to, but there'll be some interest, you know, and—and any way it's better than this impossible little hole."

"I should certainly advise you to go," Lady Deramore replied. "But I shall remain here. It's a pretty and healthy spot and I have no desire to go up to town, now all my friends are away."

"You'll stay here! But what on earth will you do? My dear Celia, you will be bored to death!"

"I don't think so," she said, quietly. "I fancy I shall find sufficient to entertain me for a week. You may leave me with a quiet mind."

Lord Deramore looked at her sharply. He essayed to speak, stopped himself abruptly, and then said with some hesitation:

"I'm afraid—awfully afraid—that you're going to give yourself a great deal of bother and—and annoyance from an idea—er—a fancy you've taken up."

"Let me have my fancy—my dream if you like to call it so," she pleaded, with unusual humility. "It can at least do no harm."

"It will do you harm. And it *is* a dream—nothing more. It's kinder for me to be blunt with you, Celia."

"Go away and amuse yourself, and leave me to pass the time in my own way."

Lady Deramore spoke sharply. She was not a patient person and she could never brook control nor the least attempt at what she would have called interference.

Her husband shrugged his shoulders and rang the bell.

"Alphonse," he said, to his French valet, who appeared in prompt answer to his summons, "pack my things and order a vehicle—I don't know what they have here in the way of carriages, but some trap I suppose—to take me to the nearest railway station. You will accompany me."

Lord Deramore left Bythesea early in the afternoon, departing in a lumbering country dog-cart pertaining to the inn.

When the cart had lumbered out of sight Lady Deramore rang for her maid and instructed that august personage to bring her hat and cloak.

Mrs. Bangs, who had lived in her lady's service for some years, ventured a remonstrance.

"It's an awful day, my lady," she said, "the wind's blowing a perfect hurricane, and there are torrents of rain."

"I am going out," repeated Lady Deramore. "Please fetch my things at once."

When she adopted that peremptory and determined tone it was simply useless to oppose her. Mrs. Bangs obeyed her commands with a very bad grace.

— Lady Deramore was a good walker, slim and

active and light. She ascended the steep, rough, cliff road at a rapid pace despite wind and weather, and she seemed unconscious of the heavy gusts that caught the cape of her mackintosh cloak and blew it out behind her like a big brown wing.

There was a preoccupied expression upon her fair, pretty face, a determined look in her blue eyes. She was evidently taking no purposeless walk through the wind and the rain.

Reaching the summit of the cliff, and battling successfully with a perfect little hurricane that tore over that prominent part, she turned to the left and made her way down the straggling irregular main street of Cloverlea.

The Cloverlea folk stared curiously from their windows at the strange lady, tales of whose fine yacht and its smart crew had been propagated far and wide.

"She's rare an' beautiful," they said to each other.

There were very few who did not admire, whether they would or not, Carol's lovely lady.

Presently, at the further end of the village street, Lady Deramore stopped, and, knocking upon the door of a cottage, asked a child, who answered her summons, to direct her to the rectory.

"You keep straight on, mum," said the rosy-cheeked little girl, with a bashful glance at the beautiful stranger, "straight on down that lane. It ain't twenty yards away."

Lady Deramore thanked her and pursued her

way. Five minutes later she was walking down the winding drive that led to the rectory house.

She looked curiously at the gray old building, so quaint and somber and old-fashioned, at the many creeping plants that grew over it and hid its antiquities with roses and jasmine and other sweet luxuriant blossoms, and at the narrow windows and the great overhanging eaves in which the swallows built their nests in spring.

But she had not much attention to bestow upon this ancient homestead that bore the marks of centuries. Her thoughts were occupied with those, or at least one of those, who dwelt within it.

She had come on a quest, a quest that was very near her heart—a quest on the result of which, she told herself, depended much of the happiness of her future.

The old-fashioned iron bell-pull that hung in the porch was heavy and ponderous, but the visitor managed it to such effect that a loud clanging peal vibrated through the house. Preoccupied although she was, she smiled at her own energy as she awaited a response.

A few minutes later the door was opened and a woman stood on the threshold. For an instant her reserved, pale face expressed merely polite interrogation, then there flashed across it a look of hatred and defiance indescribable.

Lady Deramore sprang back with a little cry. Her beautiful face became whiter than the seven-sister roses that hung in snowy masses about the old gray porch.

For an instant there was silence.

Then the woman who had opened the door said quietly :

"You wish, I suppose, to see my master? He is not at home."

She put out her hand as though to close the door, a look of cool determination upon her face, but the visitor with an imperative gesture stopped her. The visitor had quite recovered her equanimity, and was cool and determined, too.

"Rhoda Grange," she said, "I see that you recognize me, and I need not assure you that I had no difficulty in recognizing you. Let me in; I shall stay here and see the rector of Cloverlea; I have much to say to him. My child is here, in this house, and I mean to speak to him at once."

"You're mistaken," Rhoda replied, calmly. "I've never set eyes upon you before, and as for your child, there's but one child here—the rector's grandson. My master's from home, and if you want to see him you must call again."

Lady Deramore laughed unmirthfully.

"This is absurd," she said, in a contemptuous tone, "nor have I the least notion of complying with your kind suggestion. My child is here, and I intend to remain with him until the return of the rector. Your game is played out."

"Not quite, I think," returned Rhoda, with a disagreeable smile. "My master is from home, and I am in charge of his house. I don't choose for you to remain here. Will you go quietly, or shall I call the servants to remove you?"

Lady Deramore was furious. That this woman should dare to address her thus. The insolence of it!

"You forget to whom you are speaking," she exclaimed, with an angry flash of her blue eyes.

"I neither know nor care to whom I am speaking, but I do know that you'll leave this house at once."

A light footstep sounded on the old oak boarding of the hall floor. A child and a fine black Russian poodle came rushing like a small whirlwind into the porch. Carol and Rosette, of course.

"Oh, it's my lovely lady!" cried the little boy, gladly. "My lovely lady come to see me."

Lady Deramore held out her arms and he ran into them.

Rhoda started forward and laid her hand upon his slender shoulder.

"Master Carol," she said, in a harsh voice he had never heard before, "go back to the library this instant. Go at once."

He was an obedient child, unquestioningly obedient. He had been so trained, and now his training did not fail him.

"Good-by, lovely lady," he said, regretfully, and withdrew himself from her arms. "Good-by, I must go, 'cos Rhoda says so."

The eyes of the two women followed his little figure as it flitted across the somber hall. Pausing in the doorway of the library, he waved a

good-by to Lady Deramore, and then passed out of sight, Rosette trotting at his heels.

Then Lady Deramore turned away and went quietly back up the broad gravel drive through the wind and the rain.

It seemed that she was defeated, baffled, but the happy triumph of her face contradicted this. And Rhoda, looking after her, knew that she only left her to return, that her retreat was but a momentary one.

"Yes," the woman said, as she went back into the hall and closed and barred the heavy doors, "she's right enough. My game's played out. But there's more games than one."

She did not go into the library. She had no wish to meet Carol just yet. How should she answer his wondering questions?

Besides she had much to think of and arrange. She must prepare for immediate action.

A calm and particularly beautiful sunset followed the stormy day. The western heavens were rosy and golden and glorious. A thrush in the rectory garden broke into glad, sweet song that was quickly echoed by many lovely bird notes.

Carol tapped lightly on the door of his nurse's room.

"It's quite fine now, Rhoda," he called, in his sweet, shrill voice, "an' me an' Rosette want to go out in the garden. May us, please?"

"Stay a moment, darlin', and I'll come with you."

Rhoda snatched up her bonnet and went out on

to the landing, where she found her little charge with Rosette capering about him.

"Shall us go down on the sands, Rhoda, an' see the yacht?" said the child, eagerly.

"No," she answered, "best not. 'Tis late, dear, an' your grandfather will be home before long."

"He said he'd be home by sunset. I'd forgotten. We might walk a little way along the road an' meet him, Rhoda, eh?"

"We'll stop about the garden; that'll do," she said, quickly.

"Very well," he acquiesced, cheerfully, "I'll take you to see the pansies in my garden. They're very nice. I'm taking awful care o' them, 'cos next time we go to see the poor old gentlemens at the workhouse I mean to give each of them a bunch. Grandfather says another name for pansies is heartsease, an' I think those poor old gentlemens would like some heartsease, don't you?"

"Very much," Rhoda said, absently. "Oh, yes."

"Grandfather's gone to see a very old friend to-day, a friend he knowed when he was a little boy, littler than me. He lives a long way off. You have to go in the carriage an' then in the train. I'd like to go in a train. I've never been."

"Would you like to go to-morrow with me?" asked Rhoda, abruptly.

"Oh, yes," cried the child. "*In course* I would. An' grandfather will come, too, an' Rosette, eh?"

"We shall see. Don't say anythin' about it to

your grandfather to-night, love. He'll come home tired, an' won't want to be bothered."

"Rhoda," said Carol, suddenly, and his little face grew anxious and very earnest, "why wouldn't you let me talk to my lovely lady?"

"Little boys mustn't ask questions," she responded, sharply.

But Carol persisted.

"Don't you like my lovely lady?" he asked.

"It's a fine evening," said Rhoda.

"Yes," assented the child, with a little sigh; "*very* fine."

Suddenly horses' hoofs and carriage wheels sounded on the soft gravel of the drive, and a moment later the rectory dog-cart came in sight.

Jake, the old coachman was driving and he was alone.

He drew up sharply before the creeper-covered porch, and Rhoda and little Carol came quickly across the grass to him, Rosette trotting on before.

"Where's the master? Has he missed the train?" called Rhoda, as she noted with surprise the vacant seat by the driver.

Old Jake's face was very pale.

"Noa," he faltered, "'tain't that." He glanced at the child, and to Rhoda's horror and consternation burst into tears.

"Speak out," she said, roughly, "speak out, man."

"There's been an accident. The—the train," he gasped. "My dear master, wot I've served this thirty year—my dear master—"

She interrupted him fiercely.

“He’s been killed?”

“The child—remember the child,” cried old Jake.

Carol’s hazel eyes were wide open with terror.

“Where’s grandfather?” he cried, and his sweet, shrill voice rang out clearly through the stillness of the evening. “Where’s my dear grandfather? Take me to him,” he added, imperatively.

“They’re bringin’ on him home, my pore lamb,” sobbed the old servant. “They’re bringin’ my dear master home to die!”

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The grayness of night was creeping over sea and land. The brown-sailed fishing-smacks were putting into Robin Hood’s Bay, and the *Bluebell* rested peacefully upon the calm bosom of a quiet sea. The storm was over.

The tide was going out, softly, gradually, and the tide of a human life was ebbing too, quite as gently, quite as peacefully.

The rector of Cloverlea and Bythesea was dying. He had sustained fatal injuries in a terrible railway accident that had cost many lives, and they had brought him home, at his own request, to die.

There he lay in his quiet room in the old rectory house, very still and quiet, with a peaceful look on his fine old face that filled with wondering awe the hearts of those who watched him.

"His sufferings are over, and I have no doubt he will pass away quite quietly," the doctor said.

He spoke to Rhoda, but she did not seem to hear him. Rhoda was almost heartbroken. She knew and felt only one thing, and that was that the best and truest friend she had ever had was passing from her never to return. Her pale face expressed a stony grief, too deep and painful for tears.

Carol sat on the rector's bed beside him and held his hand. He was not crying; he was very quiet. There was an earnest, solemn look upon his little face, and a wistful light in his hazel eyes. But he sat still there, only holding the rector's nerveless fingers closely in both his little hands, and watching intently the beautiful old face he loved so well.

Presently Mr. Southesk spoke.

"I'm homeward-bound, darling," he said, in a low, weak voice, and smiled faintly; "homeward bound. Soon I shall be in that eternal home of which you and I have spoken so often, my little one."

"Yes," said the child, softly, "the home in heaven. O grandfather, dear, please ask God to take me with you—me an' Rosette!"

"No, no," answered the old clergyman, gently, "that wouldn't do. You must stay here for a while, my dear, and do the work allotted to you. My boy will be very brave and good always, won't he?"

"I'll try," said Carol, "truly I will." He spoke with great earnestness.

Mr. Southesk laid his disengaged hand upon the curly head.

"May God bless and keep my dear!"

His voice had grown very weak and faint, and the dear old face that Carol loved was strangely pale.

"I'm very tired," he faltered, "very tired."

The doctor came to the bedside and put a cordial to his lips, at the same time signing to Rhoda to take Carol away.

"No, no," whispered the child, "Oh, please let me stay with dear grandfather."

"He can do no harm. You may as well leave him for a while," said the doctor, touched by the little wistful face.

So Carol stayed, sitting patiently there hour after hour through the silent night with that dear hand in his; while upon the floor at his feet crouched faithful Rosette, motionless and rigid.

Mr. Southesk's eyes were closed, and he seemed to be sleeping. His pale face was very calm and peaceful, as peaceful as the face of a trusting child who is homeward-bound.

About midnight little Carol's wistful eyes met a quiet, smiling look, and a weak voice said:

"Here still, little one?"

"Yes, grandfather dear." And the child crept closer and softly kissed the pale face.

His kiss was returned feebly but tenderly, and the old clergyman said:

"You must go and rest now, my dear. But first sing to me, as you so often have sung, the song we both love so well."

His voice had grown so faint and low that the doctor, who stood near, could scarcely hear the words he spoke; and Rhoda turned away, tears running down her face. But Carol heard and understood.

So the sweet, shrill, childish voice broke the midnight silence, bringing out truly, clearly, with no faltering accent,

"There is a happy land, far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand, bright, bright as day."

A simple old song, set to an old sweet air, sung by a little child, whose baby hands clung to the limp, nerveless fingers of a dying man.

A quiet, shaded room; a hushed and awesome sense of the nearness of eternity; the faint, sweet scent of jasmine stealing through an open window; a gentle breeze just rustling the light summer blind.

In the years that came after, Rhoda Grange could never forget this scene. It was engraved upon her mind forever. And always when she thought of it there stood out in her memory, as a finely executed painting stands out from its canvas, an upturned, wistful, innocent face, the beautiful face of the child she loved—

"O how they sweetly sing!"

The song broke off abruptly, the clear notes died away in the silence of the summer's night.

"He's fallen asleep. Dear grandfather's restin' now. Him liked my singin'," whispered Carol, his little face flushing eagerly.

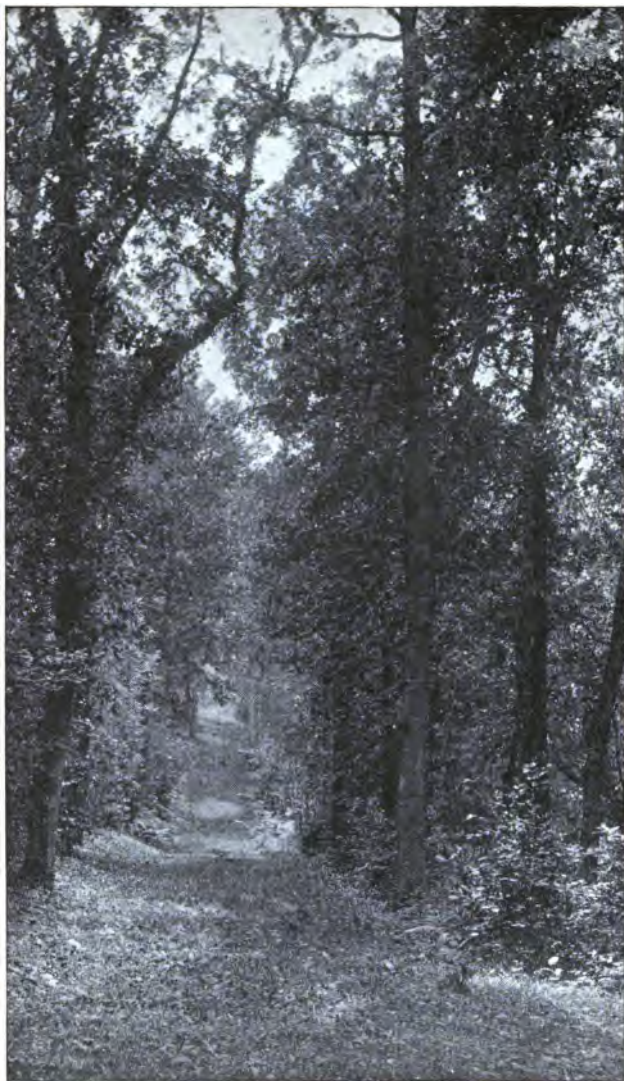
Rhoda lifted the child in her arms and carried him out of the room. Her tears were falling fast.

"Yes, my dear," she said, "he's resting. He don't want us no more."

And then Carol, tired out, fell asleep upon her shoulder.

They were right. The good old clergyman was at rest—at rest in that "happy land, far, far away," of which Carol had sung. While the little child was yet singing, his soul had fled to that fair shore "where saints in glory stand." The homeward-bound bark, having passed safely through this world's tumultuous sea, was safe in port at last.

The night was clear and calm and star-lit. A young moon's tranquil light showed a broad expanse of yellow sand in Robin Hood's little bay. The tide had gone out.



"Outside in the garden all the birds were singing blithely a glad, gay song
of summer-tide. p. 125.

go the first nice day, an' I shall take them my heartsease flowers."

Then suddenly he remembered.

A cloud passed over the brightness of his eager, little face, and his smooth forehead puckered anxiously. Springing from his bed he knelt to say his morning prayer, then dressed hurriedly.

Ten minutes later his little hands were struggling with the door handle of the rector's room. The door was locked and the key had been removed.

A rosy-faced maid-servant came quickly down the corridor. Her eyes were red from weeping.

"Open the door please, Mollie," said the child. "I want to go to my grandfather."

"O my poor dear! he ain't there, Master Carol, dear. The angels 'a' been and carried him away to heaven—the dear old master!" She threw her apron over her head and broke into sobs.

"An' he's gone without me!"

The child's cry was a very piteous one in its loneliness and grief. He sank down upon the door-mat and bent his face in his hands. He was not weeping. He felt too hopeless, too miserable, for tears.

Grandfather had gone, had left him. Dear, dear grandfather, who had loved him so well and whose affection his little heart had ever warmly reciprocated! He had gone away to heaven, to that land far, far away, "where saints in glory stand," He would never live in the old rectory

house with his little boy any more. The dear, beautiful face would never smile upon him again.

Poor little Carol! This first sorrow seemed more than he could bear.

Mollie stayed her own sobs and sought to comfort him.

"Don't take on so, honey," she said, in her homely, country way. "The old master were a true Christian. He's safe in heaven!"

"Please go away, Mollie," said the child, in a very low voice. "Please go."

Mollie mercifully complied.

"I don't know what to make o' him," she said presently to the cook, as they partook of their breakfast with appetites that appeared to be rather stimulated by grief, "that I don't. His face is that white an' miserable, but he don't shed a tear. It's onnatural, that's what I calls it."

"He always wur an odd child," remarked the cook, "odd an' old-fashioned like. But then no wonder he's opset, fur he were werry fond o' the master." Almost immediately she added, "I suppose his fine lady o' a nurse is with him."

"No, she ain't," replied Mollie. "An' what's more I don't know where she be this mornin'. She wasn't in the nursery when I took in breakfast."

"Sleepin' most like."

"Aye, p'raps so. She were up half the night, you know."

"Surely. Well, I'll go an' see arter little Master Carol a bit when I done my meal," with

which the cook poured out her second cup of tea and dismissed the subject.

But Carol sat upstairs upon the mat outside the locked door, a little solitary figure with a white, pathetic face and tearless eyes.

"O grandfather dear, grandfather dear! I do wish I could have gone with you," he whispered. "I don't want to stay here without you, dear, dear grandfather."

By and by Rosette came trotting up and sat very close beside him and tried to lick his face. Poor Rosette! She was most anxious to show the sympathy she felt.

Carol did not try to repulse her. He understood his dog friend and she understood him. They shared all their joys and sorrows.

"Grandfather's gone away, Rosette," said the little boy. "The angels have tookened him to heaven. I wish we could have gone too, you an' me. We don't care to stay here without dear grandfather, do we?"

Rosette thumped her tail hard upon the floor and looked at him with eloquent eyes that seemed to Carol to say, "Oh! if I could speak, how I would comfort you."

"I know you love me, Rosette," he said, gently. "We'll always stay together, dear, till it's time to go to grandfather in heaven. I wish it would be time soon," he added, with a little plaintive sigh.

The morning hours passed by and still Carol sat there, Rosette at his side. No one remembered the little lonely boy. The servants were

occupied with a group of gossiping neighbors who had many questions to ask and to be answered. Mr. Southesk's lawyer and also his nearest relative, a nephew, had been telegraphed for and were expected. But they could not reach Cloverlea before the evening.

And Rhoda Grange. How came it that she was so forgetful of her beloved little charge?

It was midday when the cook remembered to inquire after the welfare of Carol. She went into the nursery, and finding no one there, was about to leave the room when her eyes fell upon a square envelope lying upon the table. A closer inspection showed it to be directed in a neat hand to "Carol."

The servant looked at it in some surprise, then, taking it from the table, went in search of the child.

She found him outside that locked door, a sad, solitary little figure enough. His frail looks and mournful, innocent face touched her good-natured though careless heart.

"Pore little dear!" she said, kindly. "An' have your nurse left you all alone? Well, I *do* call it too bad of her!"

"Rhoda? Oh! I'd forgotten her," he answered, in an absent tone. "Never mind, cook, thank you; I'd rather be alone, 'cept Rosette."

Then she noticed the dog crouching beside him on the doormat.

"Why deary me, she looks that mournful too," she exclaimed.

"She knows grandfather's tookened away," said Carol, sadly.

"There, there, dearie! See, here's a note for you, Master Carol; I found it on the nursery table."

"I don't care to have it," he answered, turning his face away. "I don't want nuffin."

"Then *I'll* open it for you," said the cook, accommodatingly, her curiosity being aroused. She was as good as her word and tore the envelope open promptly.

Enclosed was a very short note, but short though it was, it filled the woman who read it with astonishment.

"Well, I never," she cried, excitedly, "I never, never did!"

She expected Carol to express some interest upon hearing these highly pitched exclamations, but as he remained quiet, with averted face, and did not speak a word, she proceeded to read the note aloud.

"It's from your nurse," she said, by way of introduction, "from Rhoda Grange."

"From Rhoda?" Carol was listening now. He looked faintly surprised.

"My own darling," read the cook, "I am going away from you. When you get this I shall be far, far away. It's best for you as I should leave you, my dear, as has always been like my own little child. If it weren't for that I wouldn't go, no how, for it breaks my heart but to *think* of going.

You will have kind friends and a comfortable home, my treasure, and they will teach you to forget your poor nurse. But though she is going to leave you darling, you may always know as you have the devoted love of

RHODA."

When he had heard this note right through, Carol looked up with pathetic eyes and said :

" I think they're all goin', all the peoples I love. I spec' Rosette will go next."

" No, no, honey," returned the cook, hurriedly, and then she rushed away to show Rhoda's wonderful letter to Mollie and Jake and the village folk, who were gathered together gossiping in the kitchen.

A fine talking ensued, and it seemed that no one had a good word to say for Rhoda Grange. They said she was haughty and unfriendly, that she had always held herself aloof from her neighbors and given herself airs. One suggested that she had decamped with the silver, another that she had filled her purse with all the ready money to be found in the dead rector's desk, a third (she was a wizen-faced old body from Bythessea, upon whom Rhoda had often bestowed small charities) declared that she had always suspected " Mistress Grange " of having an " evil eye."

An old French proverb rightly calls attention to the obvious fact that " the absent are always wrong." Here was no exception to a general rule.

No one thought of the poor little boy upstairs.

They were much too busy with their gossip and their chattering tongues flew on unweariedly.

The splendor of the summer's noon faded; the day waned; long shadows crept across the level lawn in the rectory garden.

Presently twilight came on misty gray wings; the world grew hushed and dreamy; long-winged swallows skimmed about the overhanging eaves of the old house.

"I'm very tired, Rosette," Carol murmured, wearily, "very, *very* tired. I wish the angels would come an' carry me to heaven. I want to go to dear grandfather. . . . There's no one here, Rosette, no one only you and me, us two all alone."

His curly head sank back on the mat. His white lips parted in a faint smile. Poor little child! utterly exhausted from grief and watching, and want of nourishment, he had fainted.

Rosette got up and looked at her little master anxiously. She could not understand his conduct. Why should he lie there so quiet and still?

The wise dog knew that this was no ordinary, natural sleep. She gently licked the tumbled, golden-brown curls, the little limp hands.

Her caresses met with no response, and her uneasiness was increased. She gave a low, dissatisfied whine and shook herself. Then she threw up her head and trotted away to summon assistance.

And there, alone on the floor, a solitary, unconscious little figure, but dimly visible in the

failing light lay the child who had been the old rector's darling, forgotten and alone!

Poor deserted little one! Surely some pitying angels spread their white wings above him protectingly, tenderly. For we know he loves the little children who was once a child himself—the Holy Child of Nazareth—and we may read that “Their angels do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven.”



"Only one word more—be kind to my darling."

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS BABY.

Innocence is strong,
And an entire simplicity of mind
A thing most sacred in the eye of heaven.

WORDSWORTH.

For since One filled for us in utmost love,
A manger bed,
With special tenderness he bends above....
Each baby head.

MARY POWLES JARVIS.

WHEN Lady Deramore left Cloverlea Rectory
on that tempestuous afternoon, she retraced her

way down the steep cliff road to Bythesea with a rapidity that did not appear to be in the slightest degree impeded by the wind and the rain.

Her beautiful face wore an expression of exultant gladness and her step was light and quick. She was evidently elated rather than repulsed by her interview with Rhoda.

Immediately upon reaching the inn, she despatched a lad to the nearest railway station to send off a telegraphic message to Lord Deramore.

The lad as he plodded away through muddy lanes and flooded meadows spelled out the message, and his eyes grew round and his mouth opened wide.

"Our child is here with nurse Rhoda Grange. Come at once."

That was all; brief and to the point, and likely to produce an impression even upon the mind of careless Lord Deramore.

This telegram despatched, Lady Deramore could do nothing but await a reply as patiently as she could manage. She did not know much about patience and it was rather an impossible virtue to her. The hours of that stormy afternoon seemed to drag by with leaden slowness. The day seemed interminable.

And there was no one in whom she might confide. That made things worse.

The fine calm sunset-time, with its rosy and golden west, and its cessation from wind and rain, made it possible for her to go out. A stroll on

the sands was a relief, and it was pleasant enough down by the sea at this quiet hour of parting day.

Old Master Goble sat on a breakwater mending his nets.

"Good-evenin' to ye, lady," he said, politely, and touched his sou-wester.

"Good-evening," she replied, in a gracious tone. "A fine evening after such a stormy day, isn't it?"

"That's often the way in these here parts, lady. Arter the storm comes th' calm, so they sez, them as knows."

"Yours is a pretty village. And you have an excellent rector, I understand?"

"Yes, he's a Christian gentleman, lady. There's none as'll deny that theer fac'."

"And—and his little grandson? He has a sweet face." Lady Deramore spoke with unusual hesitation. Her voice was nervous, uncertain.

"Master Carol!" said the old fisherman, a bright smile lighting up his weather-beaten face. "There ain't a dearer child in all the wide world, bless his little heart!"

Old Master Goble could discourse unweariedly by the hour upon the perfections of the child of Cloverlea Rectory. He adored Carol.

"There's not a soul but loves that little one," he said, "he's that kind and thoughtful and gentle. Old-fashioned they calls him, an' maybe, maybe. But there's some'at o' the angel about him, some'at different to other children, they all sez that."

"I can see you are very fond of him," exclaimed Lady Deramore. Her blue eyes were very bright, and they shone with a suspicious moisture.

"Fond o' him! yes, you're right there, lady," assented the old fellow. "An' well I may be. Why, last winter, lady, when I were laid up wi' the rheumatiz ter'bul bad, ter'bul, he'd come to see me every day, the little master from the rectory would. He'd bring me this, an' that—delicacies from their own table—an' he'd sit an' talk to me by the hour. An' he'd read to me, as beautiful as you please, out o' the Bible, my dear old mother's Bible, wot I keeps on my chimney-shelf along o' my few valuables. An' my! ca'ant he read lovely!"

When Lady Deramore got back to the inn she found an answering telegram awaiting her:—

- "Will be with you to-morrow. Take no steps till I come.

DERAMORE."

A disappointing message this. To-morrow! The delay, brief though it was, seemed hard to the impatient heart.

Night was closing in. There was nothing to be done in the face of that telegram. Lady Deramore saw with chagrin that she must wait. She detested waiting.

To-morrow! So many things might happen before then.

She threw off her hat and cloak and went into the

little parlor. It was a funny, old-fashioned little room. There were pictures worked in wool, and wax flowers beneath glass shades. Over the door was jauntily perched a very melancholy-looking stuffed owl.

The landlord was setting the table for dinner with what style he could muster. He was a voluble, red-faced, deferential person. Lady Deramore thought him a great nuisance. She didn't wish to be bothered by his remarks. When he attempted to retail scraps of select village gossip for her benefit she snubbed him unmercifully.

But to-night he really had something of importance to relate, and conscious of this he boldly hazarded rebuff and plunged into his subject.

This was courageous of him, for Lady Deramore had established herself in the corner of the window seat with a newspaper, and was almost hidden by the wide-spread sheets of the *Times*.

The landlord cleared his throat in an introductory manner.

Lady Deramore took not the slightest notice.

"My lady."

No reply; the *Times* remained immovable.

"If you please, my lady."

"Are you speaking to me, Mr. Green?" A cold and discouraging glance was bestowed upon him.

"I was about to tell you a bit o' bad news, my lady. Our poor minister, the best o' Christian gentlemen, has met with a ter'bul bad injury in a railway accident, an' he lies at the rectory

dyin'. All the village is uncommon upset. We've thought a deal o' parson, my lady."

Certainly Lady Deramore was interested now.

"I am indeed sorry to hear this," she exclaimed, in a shocked tone.

"Yes, my lady, and theer ain't no shadow of a hope for the poor gentleman's recovery. He's done for, an' we're deprived o' the best o' ministers," said the landlord, with a good deal of feeling.

"Has he had medical attention?"

"All's bin done as could be, so they say, my lady; but theer, man's but mortal, even the best o' 'em," concluded Mr. Green, with more display of philosophy than grammar.

"I am very, very sorry," repeated Lady Deramore. "I am sure he must be a good man."

"That he were, an' we can ill spare him. But theer, he's likely gone by now; they said as he couldn't live many hours. I've made you some o' my sparrer-grass soup, my lady, an' if you'll please to taste it 'ot, as 'tis now, I think you'll be pleased to approve o' it." Mr Green whisked the top off of the tureen with an inviting and complacent air.

The sudden change of subject was quite too much for Lady Deramore's over-wrought nerves. She felt as if she must break into hysterical laughter.

"You can leave the room," she said, with a great effort. "My maid will wait upon me."

The red-faced landlord retired in depressed

spirits. He could not tell in what way he had offended.

Mrs. Bangs looked respectfully cross when she came to take his place. Her rigid presence was scarcely encouraging.

Nor was the "sparrer-grass" soup particularly nice. Lady Deramore scarcely tasted it.

She was tired and impatient and restless. Her head ached and she had no appetite. The room was hot—close. When Mrs. Bangs opened the window there was a draught, and that was worse than the heat. The chicken was overdone and the cauliflower was hard. Certainly the cooking at this stupid little country inn was vile. It was stupid too, terribly stupid, of the landlord to decorate the table with marigolds. Their strong perfume was overpowering.

"In fact, nothing's right nor will be this evening, or my name's not Jane Bangs," said that much-tried woman to herself, as she carried away the transgressing blossoms.

Lady Deramore went to bed early. She hoped to forget in sleep the tedious waiting time she had experienced through the afternoon and evening.

But the much-coveted oblivion eluded her and she tossed restlessly upon her pillows wakeful and nervous, and with an aching head.

It was horridly tiresome to hear the big clock on the landing strike the hours, and its heavy, monotonous tick-tack kept her awake she felt sure.

Two o'clock! So late—or rather so early! She lighted a candle and looked at her watch. Yes, the noisy old clock was quite right.

It seemed to her that she had scarcely slept for half an hour when she heard the respectful voice of Mrs. Bangs, saying:

"Eight o'clock, if you please, my lady."

"All right," she said, impatiently and sleepily. "All right. You can leave me for the present."

"I'm sorry to disturb you, my lady," Mrs. Bangs responded, politely, "but I've a note for you—from—from a person as once lived in your ladyship's service. Please to prepare your mind, my lady, for a shock."

Lady Deramore sat up; she had never been more awake in all her life.

"Speak plainly what you mean," she said, peremptorily.

Mrs. Bangs's dignity was somewhat ruffled.

"I wished to spare you, my lady," she remarked, "to prepare your mind. But since you bid me speak plain, so I will. But ten minutes ago, as I stood in the porch below, takin' a breath o' mornin' air, up walks Miss Grange—Rhoda Grange, my lady, as you may remember was—was—"

"Lord Carnegie's nurse. Precisely so. Go on," said Lady Deramore, calmly.

Mrs. Bangs was fairly astounded by her evident want of surprise and by her perfect coolness.

"You might 'a' knocked me down wi' a feather,"

she confided afterwards to Mrs. Comfort. "An' there was she as quiet an' easy as you please."

"The quality ain't got no feelings," said the housekeeper, in response.

"Go on, Bangs," exclaimed Lady Deramore, more impatiently.

"As I was sayin', my lady," said Mrs. Bangs, rather breathlessly—she was fat and didn't like to be hurried—"as I was sayin', up walked Miss Grange, as were little Lord Carnegie's nurse, and puts a note in my hand, and says, says she, as cool as a cucumber: 'Good-morning, Mrs. Bangs. Kindly oblige me by handing that to your lady at once.'"

"What next, Bangs, what next?"

"While I was staring in sheer surprise and wonder, my lady, she turns on her heel and walks off. When I ran out she was away—not to be seen."

"Exactly. Your movements, Bangs, are, I am well aware, not alarmingly rapid. Now give me the note. Thanks. You may leave me."

"I can't be of any use, my lady?"

"No, thanks; I will ring when I am ready to dress."

Thus dismissed Mrs. Bangs took herself off, looking as cross as she dared. It seemed that the curiosity that had been aroused in her breast was not to be satisfied.

"I call it too bad," she said to herself, resentfully. "Most ladies treats their maids with some confidence. But to *my* lady her maid's just

a piece o' furniture to serve her, nothing more. There, now! I don't believe she's a bit of feelin' for anybody."

Lady Deramore read Rhoda's letter with the greatest care and attention. It interested her as nothing had ever interested her in all her life before. It told the story of the little child who was the dearest treasure the wide world held for her, the story of the child who had called out all the love and tenderness of her nature.

Lady Deramore was a cold and haughty and imperious woman. There were not a few who spoke bitterly of her selfishness and pride. There were many who said she was heartless and absolutely wanting in feeling.

But she certainly loved one person very truly, very passionately, and that person was the little child upon whom her eyes rested for the first time one happy Christmas night when the joy bells were ringing sweetly over the quiet, snow-clad fields.

All her heart had gone out, spontaneously, irresistibly, to that little helpless baby whom the Christmas angels had brought. She had known what it was to find "All the heaven of heavens in one little child."

Rhoda's letter was a clear and precise statement. This is what Lady Deramore read :—

"TO THE COUNTESS OF DERAMORE.

"MY LADY,—At the rectory house you will find your son, Lord Carnegie. Circumstances have

arisen which force me to leave him. I thought when our good friend, Mr. Southesk, breathed his last that I would leave this place at once with the child, but that plan has been frustrated.

"I do not think you will question Lord Carnegie's identity, but should you wish to put it beyond doubt you may easily do so. I will give you the necessary clues.

"Five years ago next November, when I was living in your service as nurse to little Lord Carnegie, an accident, caused by a runaway horse, injured the child permanently. I learned from the hospital surgeon—I took the child at once to the Brighton hospital—that Lord Carnegie must always be slightly lame.

"You, my lady, had once stated in my presence that you had rather your son were dead than a cripple. I adored the child and could not bear to think that his affliction might cause him to be neglected and coldly treated.

"I determined not to expose him to the chance of this.

"From the hospital I went straight to the railway station, bearing the child in my arms. Before night we were in London; on the following day we reached Paris.

"For more than six months we lived in that fashionable foreign town. I had been there before with a lady I was serving, and knew my surroundings. I took in needlework and managed to support the little one and myself. We passed as mother and child.

"We lived thus for six months and then my ne'er-do-well husband turned up. I didn't tell you, my lady, that I'd been married, and that my husband had deserted me shortly after the death of our child. Ladies don't care to hear of the troubles of their servants, and I was never one to talk of mine. The lady as I lived with before my marriage gave me a good written character—the one you saw—and she didn't think to mention my marriage. It was nothing to do with the case.

"But I was very fond of my little child who died, and when I took the little lord into my arms it seemed to me as if he was my baby given back to me. That's how I came to love him so.

"Well, there was nothing for it but to leave Paris when my husband came. I wouldn't have had him see my little charge for worlds and I knew I would never have a moment's peace if I stayed with him. He was and is a bad man. I don't care to say any more about him.

"I left Paris and came to London. I couldn't get employment and I became very poor. The child did not suffer; I gladly stinted myself that he might have sufficient.

"At last, at my wits' end, I thought of my old parents who used to live down in this neighborhood, not five miles from Cloverlea. I had left them, an angry, disobedient, hot-headed girl, to marry a scamp whom they rightly wouldn't say a word to. Now I would go back to them a pauper, and beg their charity for the sake of the child.

"So across the country I tramped, the little one in my arms.

"It was winter-time and hard weather.

"On Christmas night I was plodding over the snowy fields of Cloverlea when a deadly faintness came over me. I remember thinking to myself, 'This is the end. I am dying.' Then a darkness seemed to close in around me and I fell unconscious upon the ground.

"When I came to, it was night and I was alone. The child was gone. I could find him nowhere. Not a soul was within sight. All around me lay the snow-covered fields.

"It was a wonder that I ever came to. Most of those who lie in the snow never awaken in this world again, but I have always been strong.

"But I wasn't thinking of myself. All my thoughts were occupied with my lost treasure. I couldn't imagine what had become of the child.

"At last, when I had sought him all over that snowy field in vain, I decided that some passing villager had chanced to find him and had taken him to his home. I pushed on as well as I could but I was weak and tired and ill, and the night was pitch dark. Presently I fainted again.

"It must have been some time before I recovered consciousness, for when at last I did so, I found I was lying in the ward of an infirmary.

"By and by when I was better and could speak, I put some questions and learned that I had been found lying in the snow by some village folk going to service on Christmas night. They

had taken me to Kingsford Infirmary, and there I had lain for nigh on three weeks in the delirium of fever.

"My one thought was of the child. I could get no news of him. I got better and was discharged from the infirmary. I set out and walked over to Cloverlea.

"It was late in the day when I reached the village and I was very tired. I asked a woman who was standing at her cottage door to let me step in and rest a while. She was very kind and put me into an easy chair and gave me some tea.

"'You've had a long walk?' she asked.

"'Yes,' I said, 'from Kingsford.'

"'You've maybe come after the nurse's situation at the rectory?' she questioned.

"'They're wanting a nurse at the rectory, I understand?' I said, cautiously.

"'Yes, to look after the little one that parson found in the snow on Christmas night. You are after the place?'

"A feeling of thankful relief filled my heart. I almost cried out with joy, but I managed to speak quietly:

"'Yes,' I said, 'I'm after the place.'

"So, soon as I had rested a bit I wished the woman good-day and went straight to the rectory.

"It was fortunate for me that the nurses at the infirmary had set me up with some tidy clothes. Thanks to their kindness I presented a respectable appearance.

"I was shown into the study and there was Mr.

Southesk sitting at his writing-table. His kind face took me at once and I knew my little pet was in safe hands.

"There was no disagreement as to my terms, and as for testimonials I had my old ones in my hand-bag and they were excellent enough, the same as your ladyship saw. Mr. Southesk engaged me then and there.

"I entered into my duties on the following day. Oh, how joyful I felt to be with my darling once more!

"And he knew me directly. The dear innocent held out his little hands to me and smiled quite beautiful.

"Mr. Southesk, who was in the room, looked amused.

"‘The little one is very friendly with you,’ he said.

"‘Children know those that love them,’ I answered, quietly. And then I asked, ‘And what is the child called, please, sir?’

The Rector looked rather puzzled.

"‘I don’t know what to call him,’ he said.

"‘Why not “Carol”?’ said I, my heart beating fast, ‘that seems to do with Christmas, and you tell me that he came at Christmas.’

"‘Carol! well, it’s a pretty name. It is certainly pretty,’ he said, smiling, ‘fanciful perhaps, but that doesn’t signify.’

"So my baby kept his own little name that I loved. I was very glad of that.

"Mr. Southesk treated the child as though he

had been his own. Soon he grew to love him as dearly as I did.

"And the little one took kindly to the good old gentleman. When he could but just toddle about, he would patter across the room, holding out his chubby hands when he saw the rector coming. When he grew a bit bigger he would walk with him in the garden, clinging to his hand and prattling to him in his pretty baby way, and looking up at him quite confiding like. I never knew that an old man and a little child could be so much to each other till I saw those two. I liked to watch them. It was a pretty sight enough, and an uncommon one, too.

"I need tell you no more. The rectory home is broken up, and the quiet, happy life there past. My husband has come. Were it not for his coming I should have taken Carol and fled. My savings would have kept us both until I could get some work.

"But my husband is here and I must leave Cloverlea with him, and he is no fit companion for the child. So my treasure and I must part.

"My lady, I beg you to overlook the infirmity of your little son's slight lameness and to give him all the love and care he deserves.

"If he is happy I shall be more than content.

"I have no doubt you hate me for stealing your child from you. Probably you will try to find me that you may punish me. If so, you will not succeed. I shall soon be beyond pursuit.

"Only one word more—be kind to my darling."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAROL'S LOVELY LADY.

O women, rare and fine,
Whose mouths are red with wine
Of kisses of your children night and morn ;
Though fame may never call
Your names, ye are for all
The Ruths that stand breast-high amid the corn.

Pride is one of the seven deadly sins ; but it cannot be the pride of a mother in her children, for that is a compound of two cardinal virtues—faith and hope.

CHARLES DICKENS.

HIS lovely lady !

He was quite sure of that. He hadn't the least doubt on the subject.

No one else in all the world could look so beautiful—so very beautiful—and so tender and loving.

It was a dream he supposed. Well, it was a very happy dream, the happiest dream he had ever known.

His lovely lady held him in her arms and kissed him, and called him over and over again her dearest, her own darling little boy. His tired little head rested upon her shoulder and a feeling of confidence and peace filled his childish heart.

"I hope I shan't never wake up," he sighed.

"You are better? You know me, dear?" said the lovely lady, anxiously.

"Yes," he answered, speaking with something of an effort, "*In course* I know you."

"That's right," she said, tenderly. "You'll soon be quite yourself again. My poor little boy! I came none too soon."

"Isn't this a dream? I thought it was a dream," Carol remarked rather faintly, as he sat up and looked about him. "But no, this is home—the rectory house, an' there's Rosette. I 'member now;" he gave a little sigh. "I went to sleep; I was very tired."

"You were very tired," the lovely lady responded, soothingly. "I know, dear, I know."

"Grandfather's gone away to heaven. The angels have tookened him," Carol told her, his earnest eyes filling with tears, the first he had shed.

"My poor little boy! I'm so very sorry for you, dear." She drew him to her and kissed his little pale face.

"And Rhoda's gone away too. I—I don't quite know why. Rosette an' me's left all alone, just us two. We're very lonely."

"Carol, dearest," said the lovely lady, very gently, "I love you very much, and I want you to come away with me and be my little boy—my own dear little boy. Will you?"

She was so beautiful and so gentle, and the little lonely child found such comfort in her pres-

ence that it was small wonder that he looked up into her face and said, quite simply and confidently :

"Yes, thank you, I'll come ; and, *in course*, Rosette, too ?"

"*In course*, Rosette, too," she repeated, with a smile. But despite the smile there were tears shining in her blue eyes.

"Dear," she asked, softly, "do you remember any other home than this rectory house ? But no," she added, musingly, "you were too young."

"I was a little baby when I comed here," Carol answered, rather wonderingly. "Grandfather founded me in the snow one Christmas-time."

"I should like to tell you a little story," his lovely lady said. "Are you too tired to listen to it ? Yes ; perhaps I'd better put it off till we are in my rooms down at Bythesea. It will keep until then."

"Please tell me now," pleaded the child. "No, I'm not tired when I sit like this with your arms around me. I'm quite happy an' comfortable. I don't want to go to heaven for a little while yet. Not unless," he added, hastily, "grandfather wants me. Do you think he wants me, please ?"

"I think, Carol, that he knows you are going to stay with me and is glad. Listen, dearest. There was once a very happy mother to whom the Christmas angels brought a dear little baby—a tiny beautiful son. How she loved him ! O Carol ! I could never tell you how that woman loved her precious Christmas child.

"Well, dear, a sad thing happened. When the little baby was nearly a year old, his mother lost him; he was stolen away.

"They sought high and low for that missing child, but in vain. He had utterly disappeared.

"It was this same little one whom a good, kind old clergyman found in the snow one Christmas night, whom he took home and cared for as though he had been his own dear grandson."

She paused a moment in her narrative.

"It was me," said Carol, looking up at her with wondering hazel eyes, "I was that little baby."

"Years passed by," continued his lovely lady, "and one summer's evening there came a strange yacht into Robin Hood's bay. On board was the woman who had lost her little baby more than four years previously. She seldom spoke of that little child, and some people must have thought she had forgotten him, but she never had. Often and often she would think of him and dream of him. He was never absent from her thoughts for long."

"The lady was you—you, my lovely lady?" asked Carol, quickly. His voice was tremulous and eager. He looked up into his companion's face very wistfully.

"And the child, Carol, whom she found at Bythesea was the dear little baby she had lost long ago. Do you understand my story, darling?"

"I thinked my mother was in heaven," he faltered.

"No, my dearest, no. She is here, holding you in her arms."

The wistful tones, and beautiful, loving face of his lovely lady touched some respondent chord in the child's little heart. He forgot all timidity, all wonder. He only knew that this exquisite being who had already won all his childish affection was his own dear mother.

"I think," he said, lifting his eyes to meet hers, "I really think God must have sent you back to me from heaven 'cos he knowed how lonely us felt—Rosette an' me—without dear grandfather! It's very, *very* good of God. But grandfather says he's always good to little children."

"Do you think, dearest," Lady Deramore said, quite humbly, and with a wistful look in her blue eyes, "do you think you can love your mother?"

Her beautiful head bent over him. He put his arms round her neck confidingly and kissed her.

"Dear, lovely lady," he said, in his grave, old-fashioned way, "I've always loved you, always since that evenin' when I thought you was my star-angel."

"Call me 'mother,' won't you, little one? That's a dearer name than lovely lady."

"Mother. My own mother!" he said, softly; then, "I'm so tired—very, very tired. But don't leave me, lovely la—that is, mother. Please stay with Rosette an' me. We was very . . . very lonely till . . . you comed."

The little voice faltered, ceased. The weary little head fell back upon her shoulder.

"My darling, I will never leave you again," said Carol's lovely lady.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD-BY.

Dew on the grass and fragrance of fresh flowers,
And magical song of mellow-throated birds,
A beauty untransmutable to words.

MORTIMER COLLINS.

The sun was rising o'er the sea,
And long the level shadows lay ;
As if they, too, the beams would be
Of some great airy argosy.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

"THIS is my good-by sunset, Mr. Goble."

"Aye, sure, little master ; good-by to Bythesea,
an' main sorry I be."

"But my mother says she'll bring me to see all
my friends here again, some day, Mr. Goble, some
day before long."

"That's good, little master ; but I'm an old
man, Master Carol, my dear. P'raps afore you
comes ag'in I shall a' put into harbor. It do say
in the Bible as the days o' man be threescore
years and ten, an' I be nigh on eighty years."

Carol looked up at the old fisherman with a
grave, sweet smile on his childish face.

"Never mind, Mr. Goble," he said, simply.
"We shall meet again in heaven, you an' me
shall."

"Not yet awhile though, my dear. You've got a long an' happy life afore you, I'm hoping."

"Everybody doesn't live long lives, though, Mr. Goble. People sometimes die when they're only little babies," responded the child, quickly.

"Your honored mamma won't want to be spar-in' o' you yet, little master."

"No, p'raps not. An' you know, Mr. Goble, dear grandfather tolded me he wanted me to stay here, an' be very good an' brave. I want to be brave. I do a'mire braveness. It's bu'ful."

"There's a many brave men at Bythesea," old Goble said, proudly.

Carol assented eagerly.

"Awful brave!" he exclaimed. "I'd like to be a fisherman, too, you know, Mr. Goble. But Bangs says I've got to be an earl instead. I asked her, 'What work does a earl have to do?' An' she looked very solemn an' said, 'He don't do no work. He supports the dignity of his country.' So I said, 'What's dignity?' But she didn't know; she said it was a long time since she'd been to school. D'you know what it means, Mr. Goble?"

Master Goble rubbed his head reflectively.

"'Spect its summat about the same as a car'net, little gentleman," he said, slowly. "An' a car'net's what the quality 'a' got painted on their kerridges."

Carol looked deeply impressed.

"It seems very 'sterious," he said.

"Aye, there's a deal o' mystery in high life,"

assented the old fisherman, "I mind how my darter who's gone away an' married, used to read to me out o' penny novelettes o' dukes an' earls an' furrin princes an' lovely countesses wot wore diamonds and velvet. They was mysterious, every one on 'em. There were a prince wot had throwed his wife down a well, an' a duke as had killed an earl in a dool. An' as for countesses there warn't a single one of 'em as hadn't got a reg'lar ton weight o' mystery preyin' on her mind. Well, give me a less hexarlted station, sez I to my darter. But, bless you! she said she'd give anything to be a real live countess an' never mind the mystery at all. Sech is woman."

"But," objected Carol, anxiously, "I'm going to be an earl, my mother says, an' *I'm* not 'sterious. I don't want to be 'sterious. I don't like it."

"Well, theer's no knowin' wot any o' us may come to," responded Master Goble, shaking his head. "I never thought as I should hear you called Lord Carnegie, an' that's a fact, little master."

"It doesn't sig'fy much what peoples are called," said the child, wisely. "That don't interfere with their feelin's, you know."

"But," Master Goble objected, seriously, "it do stan' to reason, little master, as the quality mus' feel grander like than we poor fisher folk."

Carol shook his curly head.

"Now I'm Lord Carnegie, an' a little while ago I was just Carol. But Lord Carnegie an' Carol

feel both the same. I don't mind bein' Lord Carnegie, only I'm rather 'spointed to be an earl 'cos I'd made up my mind to be a fisherman. I'd *rather* be a fisherman."

"Well," said old Goble, solemnly, "theer bain't no accountin' for tastes, that's sartin."

Carol did not hear him. He had sprung to his feet and shading his eyes with his little hand, was gazing earnestly at the sunset glory.

"It's a *very* bu'ful sunset to-night," he said, thoughtfully, "bu'fuller than usual. P'raps the sun knows this is the last time I shall see him sink behind my dear sea at Bythesea, an' so he's doin' his best to make a lovely 'set.' D'you think that's it? Really I do. An' I consider it very nice of the sun."

"It's a powerful good settin' an' that's a fac'," remarked Master Goble, looking up from the nets with which he was busied. "The sky be very purty, sartinly, very purty."

"Do you think, Master Goble," said the child, turning his earnest eyes upon him, "d'you think dear grandfather can see the sunset from heaven?"

"Well, my dear, they do say, an' I b'lieve it's writ in the Bible, as they don't need no light up theer."

"I 'member about it," said Carol, his sweet face flushing eagerly, "I 'member now the Bible words. Shall I say them to you, shall I?"

"Surely, surely, little master."

So reverently and softly the childish tones fell on the evening air:—

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

"The Lamb is the light thereof," repeated the old fisherman. "Aye, that's it. Them's beautiful words, little master."

"Grandfather sees that light now," the child said, wonderingly, an expression of awe in his innocent eyes.

The last soft golden rays of the sinking sun fell full upon the little face, and to the simple sense of old Goble it seemed as the face of an angel.

The roses of the western sky were fading, the beautiful sun was disappearing. Day was departing fast.

Carol looked wistfully at the dear familiar rustic scene, at the high, white cliffs with the little church crowning their summit, at the quaint boathouses of Bythesea, at the rippling blue waters of Robin Hood's Bay.

Child though he was, his was a deep and earnest nature. He had been very happy in his simple fashion in this sheltered, out-of-the-world country home. He loved the humble folk who dwelt there, and he loved but little less his friend the sea, the music of whose waves whispered so many quaint and wondrous stories to his imaginative mind.

The country ways of Cloverlea, the shady lanes, the fine old trees, the quiet, pleasant rectory garden were all dear to his little heart. Dream figures peopled their lovely shades, children of

long ago stepped from the pages of history and ancient folk lore. Tiny fairies, beautiful as summer, peeped from the wild flowers' depths. Happy memories hallowed many a grassy walk, many a woodland glade.

Carol could not but remember all this.

"I shall *never* forget my home here," he said, earnestly, speaking more to himself than to the old fisherman who was his companion; "never."

A slim, pretty figure in a light summer dress came quickly across the sands. A musical voice called :

"Carol, Carol."

Rosette who had been stretched at her master's feet, sprang up and pricked her ears.

"It's my mother callin' me," said the child. "Good-night, Mr. Goble; good-night, I must go."

"Good-night to ye, little master, but I'll say good-by to you in the mornin', eh? You be goin' now most like to take a farewell o' that new grave up in the Cloverlea churchyard. Well, to think that parson lie there, an' he a younger man nor me. Well, well, the world's gettin' old in these parts," meandered on the old fisherman. "I'm thinkin', dearie, as the last bit o' youth will go with your sweet face!"

Carol paused a moment, a wondering expression in his earnest eyes.

"I'm not goin' to the churchyard," he said. "Grandfather isn't there; he's in heaven, safe an' happy. Why, Master Goble, don't you know that?"

He looked surprised and even grieved.

"Had you forgotten, Master Goble?" he asked.

"Aye, aye, surely I had, little master."

"An' you know quite well that dear grandfather's in heaven?"

"To be sure."

"I know," said the child, "I feel it here." He laid his hand upon his heart. "I feel quite, *quite* sure."

There was a light of simplest faith in his beautiful earnest eyes. It seemed to old Goble that those eyes, looking up at the calm evening sky, beheld things unrevealed to him.

"Carol, Carol!"

Lady Dera more was calling impatiently from the little landing-stage. She was going on board the *Bluebell* and wished the child to accompany her. She waved her ebony silver-topped stick vigorously.

"Good-night, Mr. Goble, good-night."

"Good-night to ye, little master."

The old fisherman took his pipe from his mouth and looked after the little active figure as it sped away over the sands.

"Aye," he said, musingly, "it's hard to let him go—the little 'un. I'll miss him sorely. Just to look on his sweet face does me a power o' good. A Christmas child they calls him. Well, it seems to me as if them Christmas angels has left some o' their pure glory shinin' on him."

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At dawn of day, when the tide was high, the *Bluebell*, loosened from her moorings, skimmed out over the rippling, sunlit sea like an emancipated bird.

Lord Deramore had no further use for his yacht at present. He was lending her to a friend, whom he knew to be longing for a cruise to Norway. He had much to arrange, and he intended to go to Sunnymeadow with Lady Deramore and the newly-discovered little Lord Carnegie.

He was delighted with the child. Carol was a pretty little fellow, and possessed charming manners. He had absolutely no fault to find with him.

"A trifle old-fashioned perhaps," he said; "but that's from the life he's led, and he will soon lose it."

"He will lose it all too quickly," responded Lady Deramore, dryly.

All Bythesea and Cloverlea too, turned out to witness the departure of "little master from the rectory."

It seemed that Carol had many humble friends.

"Quite a sensation," laughed Lady Deramore, as she stepped into the open station fly that had come to take the travelers to Kingsford. "Carol, dearest, I'd no idea you were such a public personage." She swept a glance of amused and rather pleased surprise over the rustic crowd that thronged the doorway of the inn.

Rosette darted out and sprang into the carriage. She was terribly afraid she might be left behind.

"That dog really might have gone in the cart with Alphonse and the luggage," exclaimed Lord Deramore, bestowing a disapproving glance upon the black poodle.

"No, leave her alone; the child likes to have her," said Lady Deramore, quickly.

Carol did not hear this brief discussion. He was running about among the crowd, shaking hands with his friends and bidding them good-by.

"I shall come again an' see you soon," he told them, in his earnest way. "An' I shan't never forget you an' my dear home here."

"That's right, little master, that's well said," cried the big Cloverlea blacksmith. "And there's a many here as will often think of you, sir, so I *may* say."

"Ay, ay," chimed in a dozen hearty voices.

"Blessings be upon your pretty head!" exclaimed a bent old woman. "There's not one among us but wishes ye all prosperity."

"Thank you, Mrs. Challen," said the child, in his polite, old-fashioned way. "I'm very 'bliged to you. "I hope your rheumatism will soon be weller. I shall think of you often an' of all my friends."

"Come now, little one," cried Lord Deramore, "we must be off or we shall lose the train." He lifted the slight, childish figure in his arms and put Carol into the carriage beside his mother.

"Little master! little master! you mustn't go wi'out givin' me a hand-shake."

The agitated voice was old Goble's. The crowd parted for him as he pushed his way through. Carol leaned from the carriage both his little hands extended.

"Good-by, dear Mr. Goble, good-by. I shall write you a letter as I promised, an' soon we shall meet again, for my mother's promised to bring me here some day."

The old fisherman caught his little hands in his big brown fingers and raised them to his lips.

"May heaven bless you, my dear," he cried.

There were tears in his eyes. Carol couldn't bear to see them.

"Don't be sorry, Mr. Goble," he said. "Please don't be sorry. We'll meet again soon."

"I'm an old man, little master. Before you come again to Bythesea I'm likely to a' put into harbor."

"But we shall meet again in heaven," said the child, brightly. "We shall be sure to meet there, Mr. Goble. Oh good-by, good-by, an' don't be sorry."

Lady Deramore put her arm round Carol and gently drew him into his place beside her. The driver touched his horses and they started forward at a brisk trot. The village folk of Bythesea and Cloverlea waved their caps, and some children running forward beside the carriage flung big bunches of wild flowers on to Carol's lap, a spontaneous offering.

Rosette was up in an instant and barked her wrathful indignation, while her little master

waved his hand to the brown-faced, bare-legged boys and girls and called his thanks to them.

But soon the carriage was far beyond these simple village folk, and Carol could no longer hear the children's merry voices shouting a farewell, "Hurrah for the little master."

The horses had climbed the rough cliff path and reached the summit of Cloverlea.

The child from the rectory stood upon the seat of the carriage and looked with earnest eyes for the last time upon the home he loved so well.

Suddenly his little face grew very anxious.

"Mother," he said, "O mother, d'you think Rhoda will come back an' 'spect to find me here? D'you think I ought to wait for her?"

"No, my darling," Lady Deramore answered, smiling, "I don't. Rhoda has gone right away. You're going just simply to belong to me now, dear."

She put her arms round his slight little figure and kissed him tenderly. Carol returned the caress, then gently disengaging himself stood alone to take his last look at the dear familiar scene he loved so well.

The waters of Robin Hood's Bay were dancing and glittering in the brilliant sunlight. A perfect little fleet of brown-sailed fishing-boats was putting into the miniature harbor. The old gray church on the crown of the cliff stood out clearly in the fine morning light. The rectory house, nestling among tall, protecting elm-trees and firs, was plainly visible. A mist of early summer glory

lay upon sea and land, and never had the twin villages of Bythesea and Cloverlea presented a prettier or more picturesque appearance.

As Carol looked, a cloud of white pigeons passed over the silent, deserted rectory house.

The child breathed a little sigh.

"I wonder if my birds will miss me?" he said. "But, never mind, I know Mr. Goble will take care of them. Good-by, dear old home. Good-by, my sea, I'll never forget you." He waved his little hand as in farewell.

Lady Deramore looked at him rather anxiously. He wasn't crying; there was no sign of tears in his earnest, bright eyes.

But on his sweet little face was a look that meant more than tears—a grave, far-away look that she could not understand.

"Good-by, good-by!" the sweet shrill voice rang out clearly on the summer breeze.

Then the carriage rolled away along the dusty highroad, and the little one whom the Christmas angels had brought was the Child of Cloverlea no more.



"I'll tell you a secret, Peter," said the child.

CHAPTER XV.

PRIMROSE AND CAROL.

Sympathy—the one poor word which includes our best insight and love.

GEORGE ELIOT.

PERCHED high upon an old-fashioned creeper-hung brick wall that skirts one side of the gravel drive at Sunnymeadow was a little girl in a pink cotton frock. The late afternoon sunlight fell softly upon her grave, sweet face and thoughtful eyes, and turned her long masses of rippling fair hair to brightest gold. There was an eagerly ex-

pectant look in the little countenance, and the slim upright figure was all alert. It was quite evident that the waiting child upon the wall expected some one or some thing, and that ere long.

Her hands were lightly clasped upon her lap, she sat there very demurely, looking from a distance in her pink frock like some bright tropical bird upon its perch. The rooks chattering to each other, and flopping heavily about among the high elm-trees on the other side of the drive, could have told how she had been waiting and watching them quite patiently for more than two long summer hours.

There was about her an air of great expectation, of considerable anxiety. Her eyes were constantly turned towards the big white entrance gate which had been thrown back and secured, widely opened. Now and then she bent her head as though listening for some distant sound.

But sound there was none, save the cawing and chattering of those busybodies, the rooks, and the more far-away music of a nightingale's sweet, melodious evensong.

The sun was dropping low in the clear, calm summer sky. Presently the clock of the village struck eight, the heavy strokes echoing through the still air.

An old gardener, his rake and hoe over his shoulder, his footsteps slow and shuffling, came plodding down the gravel drive. His head was bent; he did not see the little girl in pink who was perched on the ivy-covered wall.

He approached ; he was passing her. The child bent forward and called to him softly, "Peter! Peter!"

"Lawk-a-daisy me, Lady Primrose! how you did startle me!" The old man sprang back nervously.

"I'm so sorry," Primrose said, contritely ; "but, Peter, I wanted to speak to you, an' I was afraid some one else might hear if I called too loud, you know. Are my sisters playing tennis, still, please, Peter? Did you see them when you were raking those pansy beds by the lawn?"

"They be gone in this half hour, my little lady, an' I heard the governess a callin' of you. Be ye hidin' from 'em, Lady Primrose? I hope as you ain't in no sort o' trouble—eh?"

"No, thank you, Peter, I'm not in trouble. I'm only sittin' here to see my brother go by. Nurse said the carriage was to meet the 6.20 train, but I think she must have made a mistake. They would be driven from Malvern in less than an hour. Rennell drives so fast, an' now it's past eight."

"Missed the Lunnion train most like, my little lady, but there be another in 'bout a half after seven. They'll be here soon, you'll see."

"D'you 'member my little brother, Peter?" asked Primrose, eagerly.

"Why, yes, my lady," assented the old man, "that I do. As bonny a baby as you might wish to see were little Lord Carnegie."

"Yes, he was a darling!" cried the child, "an'

O Peter, I did love him so, an'," with a note of joyful triumph in her voice, "though he was so little an' young he always knew me and liked me to play with him. Truly, I b'lieve he loved me Peter."

"Theer now, I shouldn't wonder, my little lady," cried Peter, smiling up at her. "Theer's naught very wonderful 'bout that, Lady Primrose, it do seem to me."

Primrose looked grave.

"I don't know, Peter," she said, slowly, "for really there's not many people who love me. Old nurse does a little, and Nancy when she's in a good temper. But my sisters don't; they say I'm just a silly little thing. And Miss Dobson don't; she calls me dreamy and careless, an' though I try to be good—indeed Peter, I *do* try—she gives me bad marks every day."

"Well, well! your little brother will take to you, no doubt, my lady. You cheer up. 'Twill be all right you'll see," responded the old gardener, comfortingly.

"I'll tell you a secret, Peter," said the child. "You won't let it out, will you, Peter? My sisters would laugh at me so if they knew."

"I'm safe enough, Lady Primrose; you may trust me. Why you've told me your secretses ever since you were half the height o' my rake here—a bit of a little lady you was, such a mite."

"Yes, we've always been friends, haven't we, Peter? And now I'll tell you my secret. I do

so want my little brother to love me, an' I've been prayin' oh, so hard, every day that he may. I'm not sure that God will take any notice of my prayer, for you see I'm only a little girl; an' he's so far away. But I've been prayin', Peter, an' just hoping he will hear me, d'you see—do you think he will?"

A flush of excitement dyed Primrose's delicate little face. Her eyes were eloquent, her voice wistful; she was terribly in earnest.

Old Peter was touched not a little. He had been devoted to little Lady Primrose ever since her baby days, she was always so gentle and so simple. He knew well enough that she was a lonely child whose young life had never been brightened by the simple family affections that make so many homes happy.

Before he could speak a pair of high-stepping bays dashed through the open entrance, and as he stepped back, a handsome carriage flashed by and disappeared round a curve in the drive.

"Mother dear," said the little boy in the carriage, looking back, "who's that little girl, please—the little girl in the pink frock talkin' to that poor old gentleman with a rake?"

"A most lucid description, Carol," laughed his father.

"The child in pink is one of your sisters, dearest," said Lady Deramore.

Carol looked at her with an expression of joyful surprise illumining his little face.

"One of my sisters!" he cried; "O mother,

have I really got some sisters for all my own?"

"Yes," said Lady Deramore, without enthusiasm, "four sisters."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" exclaimed Carol, happily; "most awfully glad. I've always longed ever so, to have some little childrens to play with."

"You don't want to play with girls, Carol," said his father, "you must learn to be a man."

"I'd like to play with my sisters," exclaimed the child, wistfully.

"And so you shall, darling, if you wish it," returned Lady Deramore, quickly. "You shall do every thing you like, and have your own way in all things."

Carol looked at her gravely.

"I don't think I'd like that, please," he said. "Grandfather tolded me that childrens would grow up very bad if they had their own way always."

"You funny, little, old-fashioned thing!" cried Lady Deramore, laughing and kissing him.

"The boy's quite right, Celia," said Carol's father; "no good ever came by spoiling yet. Spoiled children bore everybody to distraction and are generally detested, and they grow up into most unpopular, discontented men and women."

Lady Deramore only laughed the more. She seemed to think these remarks very funny. She made a point of never taking anything in earnest; earnestness was so fatiguing; moreover, it was

bad form. Of course, Carol was an exception. His earnestness was quaint and amusing, and need not be taken seriously. That was a different thing.

"Ah! here we are at your old home, Carol dearest," she said, a moment later. "Welcome once more to Sunnymeadow, sweetest."

"It's a very pretty house. I like it," said the child. "An' Rosette likes it, too. Look, mother dear, she's waggin' her tale ever so hard. Dear Rosette!"

Rosette poked her cold black nose affectionately into her little master's sunny curls. Then she sprang from the carriage, shook herself till all her bangles jingled, and capered off to inspect her new quarters.

Her investigations led her down the gravel drive to where little Lady Primrose was perched on the high ivy-covered wall.

Rosette was a friendly creature, and loved all children for the sake of the one child to whom she was devoted. When she saw the little girl in the pink frock upon the wall she sat up and begged in her most insinuating manner.

Primrose was delighted with the funny friendly black poodle. She sprang down from her perch and patted and caressed her, and Rosette insisted upon shaking hands, and then favored her new acquaintance with a series of somersaults. learned in her circus days, which performance fairly bewildered the simple little country girl.

"Why," cried Primrose, "you *are* a clever doggie. You must be a fairy doggie, I should think!"

"No," said a sweet, shrill voice, a child's voice, "she isn't a fairy, but she's very, *very* talented. That's what grandfather called her—talented. She's my doggie. She comed with me. Us has come to live here. An' mother says you're my sister. I'm so glad! You can't think how glad I am. I've always longed to have some childrens to play with, you see."

Primrose looked at her newly-found brother with earnest, anxious blue eyes.

She saw a slight, fragile little fellow, whose face was gentle and sweet and pretty, whose great hazel eyes were wondering and innocent. He was beautifully, albeit simply, dressed, in a dainty white serge suit with a silk scarf about his waist, and a wide-brimmed hat shaded his charming face with its frame of golden-brown curls. He was very small and slender and child-like, and somehow he reminded Primrose of the picture of a certain tiny prince of the fairies which adorned the title-page of one of her favorite books.

She held out both her hands to him.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, "*so* glad. I remember you when you were a little baby an' used to live here. I—I was so *dreadfully* sorry when you were lost."

She spoke rather timidly. Circumstances had constituted her a shy child. Now she half feared

that she might be repulsed—that the little brother whose memory had ever haunted her childish dreams might not care for her.

Her sensitive heart beat fast at such a terrible prospect! Surely, surely, the little Christmas child must love her.

Carol met her earnest gaze with sweet, confiding eyes. The world had always been good to him and he believed implicitly in human nature. It never entered his little head to doubt the affection of this sister, whose gentle, pretty face was turned upon him so eagerly.

He put his arms round her neck and kissed her. He had to stand on tip-toe to do this, for he was small of stature for his six years and she was a tall child for eleven.

"Dear sister," he said, "I'm so glad to see you. I know we'll love each other. An' you'll love Rosette, too, won't you, for her an' me always go together?"

"Oh, Carol! dear little Christmas Carol!" cried Primrose, "I'm so glad you've come, dear, I can't say how glad!"

"Thank you," he said, in his grave, old-fashioned way, "thank you. That's very nice of you. What's your name, please? I don't know what to call you 'cept sister."

"I think that's the prettiest name of all," answered the little girl. "But my name's Primrose, dear, an' the other children generally call me Prim."

"It's a very nice name. It 'minds me o' the

little spring flowers. But I'll call you sister, if you like that name best," said the little fellow.

"I *do* like it best," replied Primrose; "it sounds *special* somehow, I can't 'splain."

Carol looked at her rather anxiously.

"Why, there are tears in your eyes!" he exclaimed.

"No,—that is *yes*," said Primrose. "You see, Carol dear," she explained, "they're tears of joy—joy 'cos you've come. I did want some one to love me so much, Carol."

"Doesn't nobody love you, poor Prim?" asked the child, taking her hand.

"Only nurse, an' Nancy a very little."

"But mother loves you?"

Primrose shook her fair head dolefully. The tears that had filled her eyes overflowed and fell down her cheeks.

"Isn't my mother your mother, too?"

"Yes."

"But mothers always love their little children. In books they always do, an' the mothers at Bythesea and Cloverlea do, too. Oh, yes!"

"Mother doesn't love me; she don't care for girls. Girls don't count at Sunnymeadow; Nancy told me so."

Carol looked at his little sister with wondering, incredulous eyes.

"Prim," he said, slowly, "I think you've made a mistake, 'deed I do."

"Oh, no," replied Primrose, "I haven't. Mother doesn't love me not a bit; she doesn't love

any of us little girls. Papa doesn't either, nobody doesn't." She spoke with a greater display of earnestness than of grammar. Her tears fell fast. This was a sore subject. Poor Primrose!

Little Carol caught her hands in his and held them fast.

"Don't cry, dear sister," he said. "Oh, *please* don't cry! Us will love you, Rosette an' me, an' some day I'm sure mother will, too."

"Dear little Carol, kind little brother!"

He scarcely seemed to hear the grateful, passionate words.

"An' our Father in heaven loves all his little children," he said.

He spoke very softly, with a simple earnestness that could not fail to impress his hearer.

CHAPTER XVI.

HIS NEW HOME.

O little feet! that such long years
Must wander on through hopes and fears.

LONGFELLOW.

Then as I listened to the bells,
And watched the skies afar,
Out of the East, majestic,
There rose one radiant star.

F. E. WEATHERLY.

PRIMROSE and Carol were confronted in the hall by a neat-looking maid-servant, whom Lady Deramore had engaged to attend upon her little son.

"Good-evening, my lord," she said, respectfully. "I'm Groomer. Her ladyship has told you of me, I think. You are to dine with my lady this evening, so will you please come and let me dress you."

"How d'you do?" said the child, politely. "I hope you're quite well. Is Primrose comin' to have dinner with us, too, please?"

"I've had no orders about the young lady, my lord. And now will you be so good as to come with me? It's late already, and we shall have to hurry to get you dressed."

"I don't s'pose I'll see you again to-night, Carol," said Primrose. "Good-night, dear little Carol."

"Good-night, Prim, good-night, dear sister," he responded.

The children kissed each other affectionately.

A silk dress rustled over the polished oak floors with a soft frou-frou. A light hand was laid on the shoulder of the little lord.

"Run away, my darling, and let Groomer dress you for dinner," said Lady Deramore's voice, just a trifle peremptorily. "It's late, Carol. See, I'm dressed already."

She looked very beautiful in her trailing gown of rose-pink silk, and with a string of pearls round her white throat. Her little son glanced at her with a world of wondering admiration in his childish eyes.

"I shouldn't think even the queen could be bu'fuller!" he exclaimed, quite involuntarily.

Lady Deramore laughed and stroked his curly head.

"You're young to learn flattery, you little rogue," she said.

Carol looked puzzled. He could not understand what she meant. He was a very little boy, only six years old, and he was, albeit old-fashioned in some ways, simple and childlike, even for his years.

"Here's Prim, mother dear," he said, eagerly, and took his sister's hand and drew her forward.

"Ah, so I see. How d'you do, Primrose? You

had better run off to your schoolroom at once, child. You know you are not allowed to loiter about the house."

There was a very cold look in Lady Deramore's eyes when she turned them upon poor Primrose.

Lady Deramore had no love to bestow upon her four little daughters. She regarded them in the light of so many encumbrances. The coming of each had meant disappointment and chagrin, she could not forget that, and she didn't want them. She did not care for girls.

Primrose slipped her hand from her little brother's and shrank away with downcast head, and eyes that were heavy with tears. The child admired her lovely mother with all her simple heart. She longed for her affection, she had always longed for it. Lady Deramore's cold, displeased glance cut her like a whip.

Groomer bore off his little lordship in a masterful fashion.

"This is a very big house," he said, with a small sigh; "so many stairs an' such long, *long* passages."

"You're tired, my lord, I suspect," responded his new attendant, with a kind glance at his white little face. "You've had a long journey, you see. Now, don't you think it would be a good thing if I was to carry you up these stairs?"

Carol was quite glad to accept her suggestion. He was really very tired.

"But I'm afraid I'm awful heavy," he said. "Aren't I awful heavy, Miss Groomer?"

"About as heavy as a feather-weight," replied the girl, laughing. "But you mustn't call me *Miss* Groomer, my lord. You must just say 'Groomer'. I'm only your nurse, you know."

"It doesn't sound very p'lite, though, without the Miss," objected the little fellow, in an anxious tone. "Haven't you got a Christian name that I could call you by, Miss Groomer, please?"

"Bless the funny, old-fashioned little soul!" cried Groomer. "Why, yes, my lord, I'm called Jane. My old father at home always calls me Jane."

"Then I shall call you Jane, too," said Carol. "That is much nicer. It's friendlier soundin' an' politer. Is your father very old, Jane?"

"Oh yes, he's a very old man, my lord!"

"Do his bones hurt him?" inquired the little lord, with great interest.

"Well, my lord, they do sometimes. All his joints get so stiff with the rheumatism, poor father."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed the child, feelingly; "it's bad to be old. It must hurt so. But your father won't be old any more when he gets to heaven, Jane. All the peoples there are young and very strong. D'you think your father knows that, Jane?"

"P'r'aps he don't. He's never been the one to read his Bible much, you see."

"You might write and tell him, Jane. It would cheer him. Will you write soon?" asked Carol, anxiously.



Carol sighed. "They're very big rooms," he said, "very big rooms for a little boy like me." p. 183.



He looked quite relieved when Groomer said she thought she would. He was so sorry for that poor old man whose bones hurt him. It made him feel quite grave and sad to think of him.

A handsomely furnished suite of apartments had been specially prepared for the reception of the newly restored little Lord Carnegie. They were large rooms, lofty and long. Carol looked about him with very grave eyes as he walked through them with his new attendant.

"Very nice, aren't they, my lord?" said Groomer. "Just look at those silk-covered cushions, such pretty art colors! And aren't those plush curtains handsome? I've been in a good many nurseries, but never into any as beat these. You're a lucky little gentleman, I think."

"Where are my sisters? Aren't these nurseries theirs, too?" Carol asked, quickly.

"They're in their own rooms, I suppose. No, my lord, this suite is for your use alone."

Carol sighed.

"They're very big rooms," he said "very big rooms for a little boy like me. I wish my sisters lived in them, too."

"You've got your doggie to keep you comp'ny, you see," remarked Groomer, consolingly.

Rosette always knew when she was spoken of, even if her name was not mentioned. She sat up and begged, and waved her right paw.

"She wants to shake hands with you, Jane. She feels very friendly to you," said Carol, eagerly. "I always know when she feels friendly."

"Funny dog, she is sharp," returned the maid, and she good-naturedly shook Rosette's extended black paw.

Carol glanced at her approvingly.

"I'm goin' to be very fond of you, Jane, I know," he said, gravely. "You've such a kind face. I like your face."

Groomer looked pleased.

"You're a very good little gentleman," she said, "and I'm quite sure I shall be fond of you."

"Thank you. That's very kind of you."

"And now you must let me put you into your evenin' soot, my lord."

"Won't this do?" asked the child, looking down at his dainty white serge garments. "This is much smarter than the Sunday suit I had at home."

"It isn't an evenin' soot, you see, an' my lady might be vexed. You're tired, I know, but I shan't take long a-dressin' you. I'll make all the haste I can."

Carol thanked her very prettily and gratefully. He thought her a very nice nurse. He was always quick to appreciate kindness, and he saw that she meant to be very kind.

When he was attired in the "evenin' soot," Groomer looked at him with intense satisfaction.

"Just you look at yourself," she said, impressively, as she led him to a large mirror that half filled one side of the room.

The new little lord looked with very grave eyes at the clear reflection confronting him.

It was as charming a little figure as ever stepped from the picture pages of fairy lore.

The dainty dress of azure velvet with its silken scarf and its delicate ruffles of rare old lace had been fashioned after the Cavalier style of days long passed. It suited little Lord Carnegie well, setting off to perfection his slight, fragile form, and his sweet, pensive face with its frame of golden-brown hair.

He looked nothing less than beautiful.

But he was not and never could be a vain child. The story that the mirror told quite failed to elate him.

"It's a very grand dress," he said, "*very* grand. I think it seems too grand for just a little boy like me."

"Oh no, my lord," said Groomer, smiling. "It's quite sootable to your rank. You must remember as you're a lord now, the only son of an earl."

Carol sighed rather plaintively.

"Must lords be grand?" he inquired.

Groomer replied that such was certainly the correct state of things.

"I'll tell you a secret, Jane," said the child. "Stoop down, I want to whisper. I think it's rather tirin' for a little boy to be a lord, Jane, d'you know, special for a little boy with a leg that often hurts—a sort of teasing, unkind leg."

Groomer looked greatly concerned.

"Does it hurt you to-night, my lord? P'r'aps you'd best stay here an' I'll go and tell her ladyship," she said, anxiously.

Carol shook his curly head.

"No, no," he answered, quickly. "Don't do that. It don't sig'fy much, Jane, thank you. I'm used to it. An' I daresay it will feel better by an by. 'Sides, brave peoples don't make a fuss when they have pain, they just bear it quietly."

He spoke very earnestly, and his sweet, sunny face reassured his attendant.

At that moment a distant gong boomed through the old house, proclaiming dinner. Groomer opened the nursery door for her charge and watched him down the corridor.

He was limping a little, she noticed. Her face grew grave as she looked after him.

"Poor little fellow!" she murmured, "He do seem delicate like, such grave, gentle ways, and so thoughtful, an' him but a baby, so one might say."

Lord and Lady Deramore had already gone into the dining room. It was a long room with ancient dark oak paneling. The table glittered with handsome old silver and fragile glass. Delicate hothouse flowers lay in clusters upon the snowy cloth, their rare beauty set off by sprays of maidenhair fern.

Lady Deramore held out her hand to her little son.

"Come, dearest, you must be hungry. What a fairy prince! Really doesn't he look delightful?" She turned enthusiastically to Lord Deramore.

"Don't turn the little head with compliments," laughed the earl, but a pleased, proud look came

into his eyes when they rested on the slender, beautiful little figure in its quaint Cavalier dress. Certainly here was in miniature a fit representative of a splendid race, a son whose childish loveliness might gladden any father's heart.

"Lift Lord Carnegie into his chair, Giles," said Lady Deramore peremptorily to the butler.

Giles hastened to obey her mandate. He was a very pompous, portly personage. Carol thought him a fine man, but he admired the footman most. He was tall and active, and his silver buttons were beautiful.

As the butler lifted him on to the high chair of carved oak, little Lord Carnegie looked up into his face with a very sweet smile.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Giles, I'm ever so much obliged to you," he said, politely.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAROL'S SISTERS.

Ah ! what a power has white simplicity.

KEATS.

There is a mountain in Arcadia where the four winds prepare to take breath for their courses on the earth, whence force shall resound on force, and softness be answered by softness.

GREEK ORACLE.

"HERE'S the schoolroom, my lord, I'll tap on the door an' then you'll be all right. The young ladies will let you in."

So saying, the tall footman smartly applied his knuckles to the oak panels, and, having done so, hastily departed.

"Good-by, Silver Buttons," Carol called after him.

"He's really a very bu'ful young man," he said to himself, as his admiring eyes followed the tall receding figure. "Much bu'fuller than the Bishop ! An' then his buttons are so nice."

Some one opened the door, a middle-aged lady with pale hair, pale eyes, and a pale face. She wore green spectacles and she looked at Carol over the top of them.

"How d'you do ?" said the child, holding out

his hand in a friendly, confiding way. "I've come to see you. I s'pose you're my eldest sister, aren't you?"

He spoke very politely and prettily. No one looking into his grave, hazel eyes would have guessed that he was thinking to himself how like—how *strangely* like—was this lady to the big stuffed owl in the glass case in the library at Cloverlea rectory.

"Only she hasn't got a little mouse in her mouth," he reflected.

The lady spoke.

"Oh no, I'm not your sister," she said. "I'm Miss Dobson, the governess. You are Lord Carnegie, I presume? You have come to see your sisters? Please walk in."

Her voice was snappy and short. Her face was cross. Carol found himself deciding that she wasn't like the owl after all. She was like what the owl must have been before it caught the mouse.

"I s'pose she hasn't got a mouse," said the child to himself, in his funny way.

"Thank you," he answered, "I'd like to come in. I've come to see my sisters."

Miss Dobson ushered him into the schoolroom.

It was an old-fashioned, shabbily-furnished room presenting a vivid contrast to the apartments prepared for Carol. But there were bunches of sweet wild flowers in vases set upon the high carved chimney-piece, and about the table were four bright, pretty, little girls, the Ladies Carew.

"Here is Lord Carnegie, Pamela, my dear," said the governess, stiffly.

Lady Pamela looked round sharply. She was a tall, slender girl of sixteen. Her thick brown hair was coiled in a loose plait and tied with ribbons. Her frock was long, and she had discarded the pinafore worn by her younger sisters. Little Carol thought her quite a grown-up young lady.

Primrose sprang to meet her little brother.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come, darling," she cried, kissing him. Then she turned to her sisters. "This is Carol," she said.

The child gently drew his hand from hers and went straight up to Pamela.

"I'm your little brother," he said, looking up at her with earnest, beautiful eyes. "I've come a very long way to live with you, all the way from Bythesea. I didn't know I'd any sisters till I came here. I was so glad when mother told me. I'm awfully pleased to see you. I hope you're glad to see me."

A softer light crept into Pamela's face as he spoke.

He wasn't at all what she had expected.

The little Ladies Carew had agreed that their newly-found brother would be anything but an agreeable addition to the household.

They had told each other that he would most certainly be an arrogant, ill-tempered, spoilt child, who would be rude to them, and would try to domineer over them in every possible way.

"Mother is sure to make him despise us," Pamela had said. "He will soon learn that girls count as less than nothing in this house."

"Horrid, tiresome little thing! I only hope he will keep out of our schoolroom," Marcelly had remarked, while Irene only scowled.

Primrose had been silent. She didn't agree with her sisters. She remembered the dear little Christmas baby she had loved, and she longed for Carol's return.

But this little, slight, delicate boy with the thoughtful, beautiful face and the gentle voice was not the child Pamela and Irene and Marcelly had grumbled about. They all saw that at once, and—for they were really warm-hearted little girls—they felt ashamed of the unkind thoughts they had cherished against their brother.

"We're very pleased to see you, dear little Carol," Pamela said, kindly.

"Thank you," said the child, gravely. "I'm very much 'bliged. May I give you a kiss, please?"

He said this in such a funny, serious, old-fashioned way that all the little ladies laughed, and Miss Dobson exclaimed, uplifting her hands,

"Oh, the odd, *odd* little creature!"

"I think he's sweet," said Irene, boldly.

"So he is," assented Pamela. "Carol, you've no idea what a delightful surprise you are!" She laughed merrily.

Carol looked up at her with wondering eyes. He thought her very pretty and very lively.

"Were you sorry to leave Cloverlea?" asked Marcelly, curiously.

The little fellow shook his curly head.

"Not 'zactly," he said. "You see grandfather had gone, an' Rhoda had gone, and some strange new peoples were goin' to live in the rectory. It was all different, an'—an' it seemed sad. But I was sorry to leave my friends, very sorry."

"Tell us about Bythesea," Irene said. "Is it a pretty place? D'you know, Carol, we've never seen the sea. We've never been away from Sunny-meadow, never once."

Carol's hazel eyes dilated, his lips parted in a smile. He loved to think and speak of his dear old home.

"The sea there—at Bythesea—is bu'ful," he answered, "I always call it *my* sea. I've known it ever since I was quite a tiny little boy. It's so kind to me, it sings songs to me an' tells me stories. Bythesea is very blue—very, very blue. An' the sun loves it; the sun nearly always shines there. I've got a great many friends there. They're fishermen an' live in funny, pretty houses made of old boats that can't be used at sea any more."

"Fishermen!" repeated Irene, "fancy making friends with fishermen." She tossed her patrician head scornfully.

"Very odd," chimed in Miss Dobson, whose father had been a greengrocer, and who was extremely aristocratic in all her tastes and sentiments, *laboriously* aristocratic, as Pamela sometimes thought.

Now the lip of the eldest of the Ladies Carew curled scornfully.

"How narrow-minded you are!" she exclaimed.

Irene laughed. Pamela never succeeded in snubbing her. Miss Dobson was more impressionable. Her pale face grew very red.

"Yes, Carol," said Pamela, turning to the little boy and speaking very kindly, "Bythesea must be lovely. I should like to go there."

"I'll take you there some day," returned Carol, brightly. "An' Prim shall come, too. You'd like to come, wouldn't you, Prim dear?" He held out his hand to his youngest sister with an affectionate gesture.

"Of course I would, dear," she said, quickly.

"Excuse me, Pamela," said Miss Dobson, stiffly, "when I remind you that we ought at once to resume our sadly interrupted studies. Lord Carnegie, I fear we must ask you to leave us for the present."

"Please may I come again some other time an' see my sisters?" the little boy asked, as with a wistful look on his sweet face he prepared to depart.

"Miss Dobson," interrupted Primrose, hastily, "I've finished writing my copy. May I have my half-hour's recreation now instead of at twelve? I do so want to go with Carol for a little." Her face was very pleading.

"I'll be so much obliged if you'll let Prim come, Miss Dobson," said Carol, very politely.

"Primrose is so slow and dawdling with her

lessons. She doesn't deserve the smallest indulgence," returned the governess, coldly. "No, Lord Carnegie, I fear you must manage to amuse yourself without your sister this morning."

Primrose was no favorite with Miss Dobson, and this reply scarcely surprised her. But she did so want to go and play with Carol, she had so many things to say to him. Her eyes filled with tears. She turned away her face that her sisters might not see them ; she dreaded to hear Irene's scoffing tones calling her a "cry-baby."

She was quite astonished when Pamela interposed. She had not hoped for her intervention.

"Let Prim go, Miss Dobson," said Pamela. "I daresay Carol would like to have her to play with ; it's dull for him to play alone."

"Very well," sighed Miss Dobson, unwillingly consenting.

Pamela was the autocrat of the schoolroom. She ruled her sisters, and she ruled her governess, too. Miss Dobson always gave way to Pamela ; she would have had a bad time had she done otherwise.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GOLD AND SILVER.

Here we come to Tom Tiddler's ground,
Picking up gold and silver.

NURSERY RHYME.

Can gold calm passion or make reason thine ?
Can we dig peace or wisdom from the mine ?

YOUNG.

THE drive from Sunnymeadow to Malvern is in summer-tide a very pleasant one. For of all wealthy vales there is none wealthier than the rich valley of Worcestershire, rich in trees and shrubs and flowers, "with verdure clad."

The sleepy barges pass lazily along the Severn, going slowly and leisurely on their way betwixt meadow lands set about with fine old trees, patriarch oaks and elms and cedars, and decked with sweetest wild flowers.

Narrow lanes bordered with high, thick hedges are fragrant with woodbine and roses and convolvulus. Well-stocked orchards of gnarled, picturesque ancient trees, laden with apples and plums and pears, blush rosy-red in the ripening sunshine.

And the roses ! There are no fairer roses than those sweet blossoms that blow in the cottagers'

gardens of that sunny valley ; they thrive and flourish in the pure air. They are glorious roses, fine, perfect, plentiful.

Blue sky ; sunshine everywhere. Birds' song echoing, thrilling through every copse and spinney. A veritable summer fairyland.

It is a glorious summer fairyland this radiant valley—a land that laughs at winter till, closing in, the Ice King blows his warning blast of north wind over the fields, and the Malvern Hills stand out like majestic mountains of snow against the glorious rosy west of a Christmas sunset, and the frozen vale lies hushed in stillness, “to hear the angels sing.”

Little Lord Carnegie, sitting alone in his mother's victoria, looked upon the pretty new scenes with observant, wondering eyes.

He wished the horses would not go so fast ; he wanted to gaze yet longer upon the fleeting panorama of summer beauty. It was all fresh to him, he had never seen any country resembling it.

Cloverlea on the cliff was beautiful with a wild, picturesque, rugged beauty. This valley, through which he was being so rapidly conveyed on his way to his grandfather's house at Malvern, possessed a totally different loveliness. Its strength lay in pasture lands, its cultivated fields, its tenderly-cared-for orchards.

The child who loved nature looked about him eagerly.

“How pretty it is,” he said to himself. “I wish

grandfather was here to see it with me." And then came the afterthought. "But he is seeing bu'fuller things in heaven."

Carol was going to lunch with his grandparents at their place, Blissenden Grange. He had wished to take Rosette, but Lady Deramore had been averse to that idea, and so his constant companion remained at home.

She was very good. Rosette was always good, she was such a sensible dog. When Carol told her he would be back soon and she must stay at Sunnymeadow until he returned, she wagged her tail hard and licked his caressing hand. Then she stretched herself out on the rug in Carol's nursery and composed her canine mind to sleep in the most philosophical manner.

Presently Lady Deramore's swift, high-stepping bay horses trotted briskly through a straggling street of small shops and houses and over a railway bridge. Then out they sped on to a broad, white road cut through an undulating common.

The Malvern Hills were near now, lofty and green, with clear-cut outlines against a sky of soft, summer blue. The gray tower of the priory rose at their base, majestic and ancient.

A flock of white pigeons whirled and eddied about it, suggesting to Carol's imaginative mind a host of guardian angels. The bells, a sweet, melodious peal, were ringing out for some week-day service.

The horses turned sharply through an open gateway and dashed down a broad, gravel drive bordered with fine shrubs and trees. The coach-

man drew them up sharply before the roomy, ivy-hung porch of a very pretty country-house, a house of overhanging eaves and many gables.

"Silver Buttons" jumped down and rang the bell, and then he came and lifted little Lord Carnegie very carefully from the carriage.

"What a *very* nice drive we've had," the little lord said, confidentially. "Did you 'joy it, Silver Buttons? I did."

And "Silver Buttons" blushing beneath the eagle eye of Mr. Blissenden's pompous butler, murmured, "Yes, my lord."

Mr. Blissenden's butler was simply magnificent. He was so grand that it really seemed wonderful he should be a butler at all; he ought to have been a duke at the least. His dignity would have graced a peer of the realm. Carol thought him very kind and condescending. He thought it was most good of him to be Mr. Blissenden's butler. He wondered if Mr. Blissenden felt grateful to him; he hoped so.

"I hope you're quite well," he said. "You look very well; you've such nice rosy cheeks."

His grave, polite tones were most solicitous. He looked up at the big man with a very sweet smile.

"Silver Buttons" turned and fled.

The butler's cheeks grew rosier than before. He gasped.

"I'm quite well, thank you, my lord," he said, respectfully.

"I'm glad of that," answered Carol, gently.

The exalted personage then flung the drawing-

room door wide open, announcing in stentorian tones,

“Lord Carnegie!”

A lady rose from an easy-chair in the window and came forward with outstretched hands to greet the little visitor.

She was an elderly lady, stout and red-faced, and very grandly attired in flowing robes of satin and lace, further embellished by a great display of jewelry.

But her red face was kind, and her voice hearty. Carol liked her at once.

“Welcome to Blissenden Grange, lovey,” she said, kissing him. “I’m your grandma, my pet, and right glad I am to see your sweet, pretty, little face.”

“Thank you,” said the little boy. “I’m very ’bliged to you. I hope you’re quite well.”

“Quite well but for a touch of rheumatism. I don’t lose that, not even in summer,” she told him.

“That’s bad, I know,” he responded, sympathetically. “A friend of mine has it. It’s a very tryin’ illness, an’ hurts. I hope you’re not much hurted now?” He looked up anxiously at her and was reassured by her robust appearance.

Mrs. Blissenden returned his gaze with interest.

“My!” she said, a wondering look overspreading her roseate countenance. “My! what a dear, old-fashioned spoken little pet it is!”

Carol smiled, but there was rather an anxious expression in his earnest eyes.

“Yes, I know,” he said. “Everybody calls me

that—old-fashioned. I hope you don't mind much. for I can't help it. I think it's always growed in me ever since I was a little baby—the old-fashion-
edness, I mean. I 'spect you'll get used to it. I hope so ; most peoples do."

"Bless your sweet heart, my darlin', I'm not complainin'," cried Mrs. Blissenden. "Why, I couldn't wish to set eyes on a dearer little grandson than you, an' that's a fact." She took his little hand in hers and patted it kindly.

"An' how pretty Celia's dressed you ! Yes, your ma always had good taste ; even as a child she'd dress her dollies well. That brown velvet an' silk is sweet. An' the lace collar ! Why, dearie, you look for all the world like some old picture."

"And now, honey," said Mrs. Blissenden, "what d'you think o' this room ? There is a deal of pretty things about it, eh ? An' I can tell you they've cost a fine sum."

"It's very grand," Carol remarked ; "grander than mother's room. I s'pose it's almost as grand as the Queen's drawin'-room, isn't it ?"

"I don't know about that," Mrs. Blissenden replied, doubtfully ; "I've never been in the Queen's drawing-room."

"Isn't nobody allowed to go into it ?" asked Carol.

"Oh ! well, only swells."

"What's swells, please ? Is it the name of a person ?" Carol was greatly interested.

"Swells are grandees," said Mrs. Blissenden.

explaining herself with an effort, "You're a swell."

"Shall I be allowed to go an' see the Queen when I'm growed up?"

"Very likely. You must ask your pa about that."

"I'm *very* glad," Carol exclaimed, delightedly. "Most *awful* glad. I want to see her so much. Grandfather telled me she was very bu'ful an' good, an' I want to see her. I think I shall ask her if she'll let me be a soldier. Though I have got a poor leg, I could ride, you see. Then I could fight as brave as the others, couldn't I?"

"Of course, of course. An' money can do a deal. Your grandpa has heaps an' heaps o' money, pet. He made it hisself an' he don't grudge the spendin' of it, no, not he. Look at this pretty room. The furnishin' of it cost a fortune, a reg'lar fortune. Why, you will be surprised to hear that we gave over fifty pounds for the chair I'm sitting in. Over fifty pounds I do assure you, my dear child."

Carol looked at the highly decorated piece of furniture with grave attention.

"It's very big an' grand," he said. "But, myself, I'd just as soon have a little stool to sit on, just a little common wooden stool like in the picture of the three bears you know, where the big bear says awful loud, 'Who's been sittin' on my little stool?' In fac' I'd *rather*, for fifty pounds is a great deal of pennies. I should think it would

keep several old gentlemens out of the workhouse for a long time. I should think it would buy them all clocks in high cases with a strike, an' tabby cats what can shake hands as well."

Mrs. Blissenden looked somewhat confused.

"Three bears!" she ejaculated, in accents of perplexity. "The workhouse! old gentlemens! clocks and cats! An' what in the world do you know about workhouses, my darlin' boy."

"I went with grandfather to see some poor old gentlemens that live in one," said the child. "I've always 'membered them since. When I'm growed up I'm going to build them nice little houses for their own to live in. They're not at all happy in the workhouse, poor things, I know that."

"I can see your heart's in the right place, dearie," cried Mrs. Blissenden. Carol was surprised to observe tears in her eyes.

"Why, yes," he said, pressing his little hand to his side and looking up wonderingly at her. "I s'pose so. What made you think about that, please?"

But she only brushed away her tears and laughed.

And then she said; "Dear little boy! Your kind ways remind me of my own son. He was always kind to every one an' everything, even as a child. Ah, poor fellow! *Too* kind he was."

"Where is your son now?" asked Carol, gently, for he noticed that her kind face had grown very sad,

"I don't know where he is," she said. "My poor boy!"

"Is he losted?" suggested the child, at her side. "Losted like I was? Pr'aps God will bring him back to you one day. I'll ask him to."

"I don't think I'll ever see him again in this world," said Mrs. Blissenden, very sorrowfully.

And just at this moment their conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Blissenden.

Mr. Blissenden wore a large checked suit and had a pink in his buttonhole. His fingers were covered with handsome rings, a huge diamond pin sparkled and shone in his green silk necktie.

"Hullo, youngster," he cried, in a big hearty voice, "an' so here you are. An' very jolly you look in your pretty velvet soot, so aristocratic; don't he, old lady?" He turned to his wife. "Come, my Lord Carnegie, and give your old grandad a kiss."

Then, luncheon being announced, they all went into the dining room and sat down to table, as oddly an assorted trio as one might wish to see.

The great dining room was magnificent. Costly paintings in massive frames adorned the paneled walls; fine carvings and richest silks and plush characterized the furniture; the table glittered with delicate glass and handsome silver; daintiest orchids lent their rare beauty to the further adornment of the board.

And then the scene was graced by the august presence of that grand butler. He glided about closely attended by three satellites in powder and

plush, whose appearance far surpassed that of "Silver Buttons," and he looked urbane and condescending to an almost painful degree.

Carol had never before beheld such imposing domestics as the quartette now ministering to his modest wants. He looked at the footmen with wondering eyes.

"What a long time it must take them to dress," he thought. "An' I wonder how they put the powder on their hair; it must be hard to arrange nicely. Pr'aps the butler does it for them."

"You don't like champagne—eh, youngster?"

Mr. Blissenden was speaking to him. Carol looked up into his face with wondering eyes. The small, country-bred boy had never heard of champagne.

"Sham pain," he repeated, "I don't know. I've never had it. But I'm sure I shouldn't like it if it's something like the same as real pain."

Mr. Blissenden laughed immoderately.

"It's the name of a wine, sonny," he explained, as soon as he could speak. "This wine in my glass. A very good drink it is for those who can afford to drink gold. There ain't many who can, but I'm one of the lucky few. I drink it every day. I can afford a deal o' comfort. There's plenty o' money in this house, my little lord, I can tell you."

"Do you keep it in sacks, like King Midas?" asked the child. "He kept all his golden moneys in sacks. It's written in my story book at home."

"I keep it at the bank," said Mr. Blissenden.

"That's a safe place, a house where they look after it for you, d'you see?"

"I don't think there's a house like that at Cloverlea," Carol remarked. "P'r'aps it wouldn't be of much use, for the peoples there haven't many pennies. Master Goble keeps his in an old stocking hung up in the chimney corner. The stocking was nearly full once, an' then he got ill, poor thing, an' he had to take out all the pennies till there was only one tiny little silver bit left. It was very sad."

"I hope the poor creature has made some more since," said kind-hearted Mrs. Blissenden.

"He soon got some more," answered her little grandson, brightly. "It was Christmas-time. On Christmas Eve when he was out—gone to gather sticks for firewood—I slipped into his little house and emptied my money into the stocking. No one saw me but the tabby cat that always sits on the hearth rug, an' she's a great friend o' mine, so she wouldn't tell. An' next day when I went to see Master Goble he said Santa Claus had brought him such nice pennies. He was very glad, an' he smiled all over his face. I liked to see him."

"Dear little boy," murmured Mrs. Blissenden.

"Money's a most valuable possession, my dear Carol," said Mr. Blissenden, pompously; "you may depend upon that. It will buy *anything*," explained the old soap-boiler with a comprehensive wave of his heavily ringed red hands—"anything. Fine houses and costly furniture, and grand

clothes, carriages and horses, jewels an' pictures—*everything*. Affection, too, an' respect. In fac' there's nothin,' little lad, as money won't buy. It's got a wonderful power."

The fragile, tiny child to whom he thus addressed himself looked up into his face with grave, wise eyes.

"Yes," he said, thoughtfully. "It seems wonderful, doesn't it? But it won't make ill peoples well or sorry peoples glad, will it? An' 'sides, nobody can take it up to heaven. Grandfather told me so. He said it wasn't a very particular, 'portant thing after all."

"That old parson must have been an idiot," thought Mr. Blissenden, contemptuously, but he only said, "Ah well, tastes differ, but when you're a bit older you'll agree with me, Carol, or I'm much mistaken."

And Mrs. Blissenden chimed in, "Dear me, yes! Why bless your simple heart, honey, money makes peers o' peasants and the loss o' it will turn gentlefolk into beggars. An' as everybody knows that's a fact; money is *everything*."

Carol gave a little sigh.

Money, money, money, always money! The power of gold! The influence of wealth! Sacks full of money! Banks full of money! He felt very tired of hearing of it! its importance overwhelmed his baby mind. The thoughtful child was oppressed by this contemplation of colossal wealth which was forced upon him.

He was glad when luncheon was over and Mr.

Blissenden took him through the conservatories. He loved flowers, and the flowers at least couldn't be made of gold, he thought gratefully.

But even then, among those pure, sweet blossoms in that fragrant air Mr. Blissenden couldn't leave the subject of money.

"I keep eight gardeners," he told Carol, "and their wages cost me a little fortune. Well, they're needed, for the grounds are spacious, and these 'othouses"—he quite forgot some useful "h's" in his excitement—"these 'othouses really need a deal of attention."

The head gardener was a Scotchman. His name was Mackenzie. Carol wondered that he didn't wear a kilt. The picture in his geography book represented a Scotchman wearing a kilt and a Tam o' Shanter, and playing bagpipes. The same volume contained a typical sketch of an Irishman dancing a jig with a very fat curly-tailed pig under his arm.

Mackenzie was very kind and he had a real Scotch accent, although he didn't wear a kilt. He made up a most beautiful bouquet of roses and presented them to little Lord Carnegie, and he looked much gratified when the little lord thanked him in his pretty, friendly way that was wont to win all hearts.

"Mr. Mackenzie's a very kind man," Carol said, confidentially, to his grandfather as they left the conservatories, "very kind. All the world's kind, I think. There aren't any cross an' naughty peoples 'cept in books."

Mr. Blissenden laughed. This was quite a new way of looking at things, an almost unique way.

The old soapboiler held the little lord's hand tightly in his and led him about the grounds at a brisk pace. They visited the stables and the observatory, the fernery and the orchid houses. The proud owner of these things pointed out as they went the power of money, and remarked that none of these delights could be possessed by those who lacked wealth.

He was boastful to a degree. Lady Deramore would have shuddered had she heard him. Carol didn't shudder, he only felt very tired. He thought wistfully that it would be nice to be Lord Carnegie no longer—only Carol, just dear grandfather's Carol, sitting on the beach with Master Goble watching the little brown-sailed fishing smacks coming home across Robin Hood's Bay, and the golden sun sinking to rest beyond the blue margin of the wondrous changeful sea.

He was only a very little boy, and he wasn't strong or robust. That poor leg of his hurt him a good deal, and the pain was wearying.

Old Mr. Blissenden unaccustomed to children, had no idea that he was victimizing his small visitor, and Carol was far too polite and considerate to enlighten him.

But the fatiguing process came to an end at last as all things both good and bad will. Soon after four o'clock a servant came down to the stables and informed his master that Lady Deramore had called for his lordship and wished him to go at

once as she had to drive on into Malvern to do some shopping.

Mr. Blissenden was very sorry for Carol to go. He was just explaining to him some alterations that had cost over two hundred pounds.

"You must come soon again, youngster," he said, with his hand on the child's slight shoulder. And he told Lady Deramore that "her bit of a boy" was a capital companion, and wonderfully intelligent and thoughtful.

Carol tried hard not to look glad to depart. He went into the drawing-room to say good-by to his grandmother, while Mr. Blissenden stood in the porch talking to Lady Deramore, who had not left her carriage.

"Good-by," Carol said, "I've 'joyed my visit very much." And he lifted his sweet face to the old lady's for a kiss.

"Bless you, darling!" she exclaimed. "It does me good but to see you. You must come again soon, love. 'Tis long since a child has set foot in this house."

"Don't my sisters come?" asked the little boy.

"Well, no, they don't," Mrs. Blissenden admitted, with a somewhat uncomfortable look. "The fac' is, your grandpa don't care to be troubled with girls, and, for some years the mere sight o' those at Sunnymeadow has been so much aggravation to him. His one idea was a son and heir, you see, dearie, an' now we've got you safe among us again he's as happy as a king. You

must often come an' see us, my darlin,' we're old folks now an' want somethin' young to brighten us."

"Carol, Carol!"

"They're callin' me," said the child. "I must go. Good-by."

"Good-by, dearie, good-by. An' by an' by, when you're away alone with her, tell your mother that you remind me so much of my boy, my Alex. Ask her if she sees the likeness."

Carol promised to do this.

"An' please, don't look sorry," he said, patting the old lady's hand in his kind, little way, "for I really do think your boy will come back soon. I'm goin' to ask God every day to send him, an' you'll ask too, won't you?"

"I'm old to say prayers. I've never been used to saying them, you see," she told him.

"But God will hear you," Carol assured her very earnestly. "Oh, I'm sure he will, dear grandmamma. He is always so kind."



"His agent, Mr. Jenkins, collected the rents."

CHAPTER XIX.

A FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE.

In his Master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted ;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor
Shall yourselves find blessing.
"GOOD KING WENCESLAUS."

JACK COBB and his old grandfather were about equally surprised and delighted when they received a visit from little Lord Carnegie.

The "quality" at Sunnymeadow Farm had

hitherto seemed unconscious of their lowly existence.

Lord Deramore took no interest in the poor tenants who inhabited his considerably out-of-repair cottages. His agent, Mr. Jenkins, collected the rents, and if these were not forthcoming the delinquents were turned out and their homesteads handed over to those who could pay. But this little lord, finding the lonely cottage and its helpless tenants, came laden with gifts, and his sunny smile, and sweet, gracious words were not the least valued of these.

Jack Cobb's old grandfather was very ill; there could be no doubt on that score.

"They'll lay me in the churchyard 'longside my darter 'fore long, little gen'leman," he said, feebly. "An' I'm an old man, old an' ailin'. I don't complain 'about goin'; it's Jack I'm thinkin' on. What's the little feller to do all alone in the world, an' he but a child not eight years old yet?" Old Cobb's tired eyes filled with tears.

At Carol's instigation the village doctor visited the old man. Carol hoped much from his visit, but his report was not a favorable one.

"The old man's dying," he said to Lady Deramore, who was trying to display some interest in the case for Carol's sake. "He is past help."

Carol's face grew very grave.

"What will poor Jack do, mother?" he asked, anxiously.

"He will have to go to the workhouse, I suppose," the doctor remarked.

"Oh no, no!" cried Carol, in a tone of horror.
"O mother, you won't let him, *will* you?"

The doctor looked surprised.

"He would be quite well treated there, I assure you, Lord Carnegie," he said. He was an unemotional, practical person, whom some called harsh. He was not interested in the fate of red-haired, freckled little Jack Cobb.

But Carol was, and that was a good thing for Jack. If it hadn't been for Carol, Jack would certainly have been sent to the workhouse when his grandfather died, and after the little cottage on the edge of the pine copse had been let to a fresh tenant, who had immediately applied for it.

Carol was a stanch little friend. He did his best for that ragged, red-haired boy who was all alone in the world, and Carol's best was wont to be something very good.

Mr. Blissenden was ready to do anything to please his little grandson. He adored the child. When Carol asked him to send Jack Cobb to school he laughed and said:

"I'll pay for the schoolin' of half-a-dozen young vagabonds if that will please you, youngster. It wouldn't make much difference to an income like mine. See the power of money, Carol."

So Jack was sent to a good school for orphan boys, and by and by his little patron received a letter from him, in which he said that he was well and happy, and trying to work well to show his gratitude to his kind friends.

"Your father's infatuated, it seems to me,

Celia," Lord Deramore exclaimed, laughingly. "I verily believe he will indulge Carol in every freak and fancy he takes up. I hope he won't spoil the child."

"I do not think Carol *could* be spoiled," said Lady Deramore, thoughtfully. "And all his freaks and fancies, as you call them, are for the good of others. He is wholly unselfish."

"I greatly fear he will never be a man of the world."

"He will certainly be a philanthropist."

"Unfashionable—and expensive."

Lord Deramore could not understand his little son. He would have had no difficulty in understanding a boisterous, noisy wilful lad, whose spirits must be curbed, whose selfishness must be kept in check. But Carol, with his sweet, courteous, old-fashioned ways, his pensive face, his sympathy and love for all the world, his utter forgetfulness of self, baffled his perceptions. He admired the child, he was obliged to admire him; but he was not satisfied with him. He wanted to make a little man of the world—a modern boy—of him, and he doubted whether he should ever succeed in so doing.

Mr. Blissenden was striving for the same end.

"We mustn't let the child grow too good for this world," he said, anxiously, to his wife, "that won't do."

"He's a darling," said Mrs. Blissenden; "old-fashioned maybe, but so sweet and kind."

"Sweet and kind," growled the old soapboiler,

"I believe you there. But if he's to get on in the world he must learn to think more of himself and less of other people."

Carol was thinking a great deal of other people ; it was natural to him to do so. Just now, these "other people" were represented by the humble village folk of Sunnymeadow. Unwillingly Lady Deramore allowed him to make their acquaintance. Half vexed, half pleased, she watched her little son ministering to their wants, listening to their woes, speaking simple words of sympathy.

He was so eager to help them, so anxious to know all about them. He would have been very unhappy if she had kept him from them.

His presence became a very welcome one to the poor folk of Sunnymeadow. The child who had been the little friend of the fishers at By-thesea could understand them and sympathize with them, and his simple words were intelligible to them.

Lord Deramore frowned, but did not interfere.

"The boy is a mere baby. He'll forget all this by and by," he said, "and especially if we do not oppose him. Opposition is an incentive. He is an evangelist at six. He will be an egotistical dandy at sixteen."

Primrose was Carol's constant companion ; with him she visited his humble friends. She no longer called poor people "common." Her sympathies were enlarged and her interests widened. She tasted the joy of helping others to be happy.

And so as the autumn days sped by, and the flowers faded, and the swallows winged their flight to the summer southern lands, the child whom the Christmas angels brought endeared himself to all at Sunnymeadow.

He was trying, in his simple, childish way, to follow the steps of that Holy One who was the first Christmas child, and whose gentle life was spent in doing good.



"His poor friends interested him deeply."

CHAPTER XX.

CAROL IN LONDON.

Strange questions doth he ask of me when we together
walk ;
He scarcely thinks as children think or talks as children
talk ;
His little head is busy still and oftentimes perplexed
With thoughts about this world of care, and thoughts
about the next.

MOULTRIE.

The wind that beats the mountain blows
More softly round the open wold ;
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

LORD TENNYSON.
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THE re-opening of Parliament in November summoned Lord Deramore to take his place in the House of Lords. As a rule Lord and Lady Deramore left the children at quiet Sunnymeadow when they went to town. But Sunnymeadow stood in need of repairs which could not be carried out while the house was inhabited, so on this occasion the Deramores removed to London *en famille*.

Little Carol was sorry to leave Sunnymeadow and his many poor friends. His poor friends interested him deeply and he had been very happy in this country home.

But his sisters were delighted to go. They longed to live in new rooms and see fresh faces and scenes. They had not once left Sunnymeadow in all their young lives, and they were charmed at the prospect of a change.

Carnegie House stood in Park Lane. It was a commodious mansion, and the children's quarters were situated in an upper region far away from the reception-rooms. The little Ladies Carew discovered to their chagrin that they would see and hear very little of what went on below. An occasional glimpse of some fashionably attired visitor from the barred window of their schoolroom was their only solace.

But little Lord Carnegie was not thus thrust away. The apartments prepared for him were on the same floor as his mother's boudoir, and moreover he was free of the whole house and might come and go as he pleased. Lady Deramore could never see too much of her boy.

Mr. Blissenden had given his grandson a beautiful little brown pony, and the child had learned to ride it in the quiet fields of Sunnymeadow. Carol was a plucky boy, although so slight and small, and he seemed to possess a natural aptitude for equestrian exercise. The groom who taught him was delighted with the rapid progress he made.

"He sits like a little jockey!" he told Lord Deramore. "I never see a child sit prettier. An' he's that neat with his hands."

Lord Deramore was pleased. He wished his son to excel in all things, and he himself had belonged to a cavalry regiment and was an excellent rider.

Carol mounted on "Brown Bob," rode with his mother in Rotten Row almost every morning. Lady Deramore was proud and pleased when people turned to look at her boy, and her quick ears caught murmurs of "Pretty little fellow!" "Capital rider that for a small child," etc. She smiled down upon the tiny figure in its smart, businesslike riding costume, and Carol with an answering smile shook Brown Bob's bridle and trotted up beside her.

Rosette accompanied them on these rides. She scampered by Carol's pony and seemed thoroughly to enjoy the exercise.

The air and exercise brought summer roses into little Lord Carnegie's pale face, and he looked the living picture of a happy, healthy English boy.

Lord Deramore's many friends congratulated

him upon his bonny small son, and society papers displayed complimentary paragraphs about the little Viscount. The country child of Cloverlea was the perfectly-dressed and tenderly cared-for *enfant prodigue* of London drawing-rooms.

How he preserved his simplicity was a marvel, but preserve it he did. He was the same gentle, thoughtful little one who had wandered upon the shore of Robin Hood's Bay, with old Master Goble. Perhaps Lady Deramore had been right when she said he was unspoilable.

A French governess was engaged to teach his little lordship for a few hours daily. She was young and pretty, and very kind. Carol soon grew fond of her. They became firm friends.

It was not long before Mlle. Rene confided most of her simple family history to her sympathetic pupil. It was a sad little history, Carol thought.

Her mother had died when she was still a mere child, and only a few years later, her father, a French refugee, had lost the use of his limbs in a terrible railway accident. Through the kindness of friends he had been placed in an almshouse, while an aunt in fairly good circumstances gave mademoiselle a home, from which she went out daily to give lessons.

Carol was greatly interested.

"Please tell me what an almshouse is," he said, "I have never seen one. Is your father comfortable in them, ma'mselle?"

"Oh! but he is very comfortable, I can assure you," answered the young French lady, cheerfully.

"It is so homelike, so pleasant. What is an almshouse, do you ask, *cheri*? It is a home for the aged, those who are poor and cannot provide for themselves. It is a charitable institution. Each aged gentleman is provided with a couple of rooms nicely furnished; an attendant sees to their wants. There is a chapel, also a dining-hall wherein they take their meals *ensemble*. It is a good institution."

Carol was greatly impressed.

"It must be very good," he said. "When I grow up an' have money I will build an almshouse. I am so sorry for peoples that are old an' poor; it is so sad for them. They're obliged to go to the workhouse, an' that's a dreffle dismal place. I went there once to see some poor old gentlemen. I've never forgotten them."

"Ah! it is terrible. The poor dread it. You are a benevolent child, Carol. May you be a benevolent man!"

Carol looked up into her face with grave, anxious eyes.

"I want to grow strong an' live to be a man. I hope I shall. You see if I don't I shan't be able to make a home for the poor old people I keep thinkin' about."

Mlle. René glancing at the slight, fragile, little figure, the delicate, childish face, felt a lump rise in her throat. But she only said, cheerfully.

"I have no doubt you will become stronger by and by. The young are often weak. You are but little yet, *mon cher*."

A day or two later she told him,

"I go this afternoon to visit my father in the almshouse, *cheri*. It is always a happy time for us both when we thus meet."

An eager flush dyed little Lord Carnegie's pretty face.

"O ma'm'selle," he said, quickly, "I wonder if you'd let me go with you? Should you mind? I *do* so want to see an almshouse."

Mlle. René looked doubtful. She did not feel sure of what Lady Deramore would say to this arrangement.

"Perhaps her ladyship might not like it," she remarked.

"I will go and ask her."

Carol was away before she could detain him.

He came back delighted, having won the desired permission.

"Ma'm'selle," he said, "I'd like to take your father a little present. What d'you think he'd like?"

Mademoiselle looked pleased.

"You are so kind and thoughtful," she exclaimed.

"But what would he like?" pursued Carol, disregarding the compliment.

Mademoiselle did not seem to know.

Carol was thrown entirely upon his own resources.

Finally he decided that flowers would make the prettiest gift.

"Every one loves flowers, you see," he said.

"We'll buy them on the way. Is the almshouse far from here, ma'm'selle?"

"It is at Battersea—some way. I go generally by the omnibus; but Lady Deramore may not like it that you should travel thus."

"I think it will be great fun," said Carol, brightly. "We'll go on the top, if you don't mind. I've always longed to go on the top of an omnibus."

So little Lord Carnegie went on the top of an omnibus to the almshouse at Battersea.

Old Monsieur René was greatly delighted with his child guest, who came into his little room like a gleam of summer sunshine and with hands full of delicate, fragrant, hothouse blossoms. Carol's ready sympathy and intelligent remarks quite won the aged Frenchman's veteran heart.

At Mlle. René's request, the master of the almshouse took little Lord Carnegie all over the institution. The master was very polite, and he was greatly entertained by Carol's grave and sensible remarks and by the interest he displayed in all he saw.

"Thank you so much for showin' me all these things," the little lord said, presently, in his sweet, polite way. "I wanted to see them very much. You see, when I'm grown up I mean to make a house like this for poor old people to live in. Grandpapa says I shall have a great many pennies, an' I can do what I like with them."

The master was much impressed. He always remembered the visit of that little delicate-look-

ing child with the thoughtful eyes and the sweet, earnest voice.

"And really," he told his wife, "he seemed more like some angel child than an ordinary boy; quite unlike an ordinary mortal somehow."

As for old Monsieur René, to this day he cherishes between the leaves of his favorite history of France a few pressed, faded blossoms that were once glowing, living flowers in a generous little hand that was ever ready to give; and he says to some of the veterans who are his neighbors in the almshouse:

"Que ces fleurs sentent bon! Elles étaient le cadeau d'un ange."

The veterans wonder.

One day a very handsome and well-dressed old lady was ushered into the drawing-room of Carnegie House. Giles showed her in with a stentorian:

"Her Grace the Duchess of Duncton," delivered in his most imposing manner.

Lady Deramore was dressing to go out to a concert, and Carol was alone in the drawing-room, sitting on a sofa, reading a fairy story of absorbing interest. He put down his book as the Duchess entered the room and went forward to meet her. She was very imposing, and most small children quailed in her august presence. But she didn't alarm Carol. He was never afraid of any one.

"How d'you do?" he said, extending a friendly

little hand. "I hope you're quite well. Mother will come d'rectly."

The Duchess sank into an easy-chair and looked him over critically from head to foot.

"So *you're* Lord Carnegie, are you?" she remarked.

"Yes," said Carol, cheerfully, "that's what I'm called. An' what's your name, please? I didn't hear what Giles said when he 'nounced you."

"I'm the Duchess of Duncton," that lofty personage informed him, impressively.

Carol broke into a merry little laugh.

"Well, that *is* funny," he exclaimed, "we had a cow at home that was called Duchess. The same name as you, you see. She was a very nice cow," he added, sweetly, "an Alderney. Light brown, you know, with big soft eyes and a lovely tail."

For a moment the visitor looked annoyed, then her face relaxed, and she, too, laughed as merrily as Carol.

"It's quite a singular coincidence, isn't it?" she said, good-humoredly. "And how do you like being Lord Carnegie, eh? It's a very grand life compared with the simple existence you led at Cloverlea, eh?" She looked sharply from the sweet, upturned little face to the dainty suit of reseda velvet and silk.

"I like to be Lord Carnegie very well, thank you," answered the child, in a grave, old-fashioned way. "But," and here he came close up to the Duchess of Duncton and laid his little hand upon

her arm and spoke in a confidential whisper, "I like best to be just Carol, grandfather's Carol at Cloverlea. Cloverlea is a dear place an so's Bythesea, an' Robin Hood's Bay; you'd love Robin Hood's Bay if you knew it. Don't you love the sea?"

"I'm a bad sailor," said the Duchess, briefly. "And so you would rather have stayed at Cloverlea, eh?"

Carol shook his curly head.

"Not after grandfather went!"

"He left?"

"He went to heaven. That's far away from Cloverlea, you see."

"Ah! I dare say, funny little boy. And how d'you like London?"

"There's a many peoples in it," said the child, thoughtfully, "an' some's very bu'ful an' very grand. They are kind; I like them. An' their bu'fulness is pleasant to look at, isn't it? Mother had a tea yesterday; a great many peoples came. One lady sang lovely. She was dressed in white. I stood near the piano an' listened to her. At first I thoughted she was an angel; I tried to see if she had wings. 'Why d'you look at me so gravely?' she said, smilin'. 'Are you an angel?' I asked. 'I was tryin' to see your wings.' She only laughed. But a gentleman who stood near said, 'Yes, she's an angel, but her wings have not grown yet.' So she *was* an angel, you see. I never saw one before."

Just then Lady Deramore came into the room.

"I must apologize for keeping you waiting, dear Duchess," she exclaimed, embracing her visitor, effusively. "So sorry. I'd no idea you were in town, d'you know. I hope your godson has been entertaining you."

"He has," responded the old lady, smiling graciously upon Carol. "He is a host in himself."

Lady Deramore looked pleased. She thought a great deal of the Duchess of Duncton, who was one of her oldest and kindest friends, and the Duchess was not fond of children, which fact enhanced the importance of her favorable remark.

"You might go and fetch your hat, darling," she said to her little son. And having thus disposed of him for a few moments, she turned to her visitor and asked her, eagerly :

"What do you think of him? You know how great a value I set upon your opinion, dear Duchess. I have been longing for you to see the child."

"I think he is charming," was the unhesitating reply. "Don't spoil him, Celia; he's too good to be spoiled."

Lady Deramore's beautiful eyes sparkled with pleasure,

"And the—the limp is very slight," she said, rather nervously.

"Scarcely perceptible; but he looks a fragile, little creature. You must take care of him, my dear."

"He never complains. I think, although he

looks delicate, he feels well," responded Carol's mother, quickly.

"You must let Cobalt paint him. His studies of children are so charming, and he is excellent at portraits."

"Cobalt? Some new artist?"

"A *protégé* of mine, and a promising one. He had two pictures in the last Academy, and one—a very fine painting—in the New Gallery. I should like a portrait of my little godson. May I take him to Cobalt?"

"Certainly, my dear Duchess, if you wish it."

"I do wish it. The child has the sweetest little face my eyes have rested on for years. I'll arrange a sitting with Cobalt and let you know. I'm greatly interested in Cobalt, and I believe that boy's portrait will raise him to fame. You see, I'm not thinking only of my godson."

"Carol," said the Duchess, as the little boy re-entered the room, "I'm going to take you to have your portrait painted. You've no objection, eh?"

He looked up at her with his brightest smile. "I'd like it 'cos the Brown Boy had his done. The Brown Boy at Sunnymeadow, you know. Thank you very much, Duchess."

"The Brown Boy," repeated the old lady in astonishment.

Lady Deramore explained.

"Carol's referring to an ancestral portrait," she said, "a boy dressed in brown velvet. It is in the drawing-room at Sunnymeadow. I don't think you've seen it."

"No; but the name suggests an idea to my mind. You shall be painted as the Blue Boy, Carol; Gainsborough's Blue Boy. It's a dainty, pretty dress, and will suit you admirably. Do you approve, Celia?"

"Charming! We will order the costume at once."

The Duchess of Duncton left Carnegie House in a very good humor. She was confident that her *protégé's* Blue Boy would outrival the well-known painting of the grand old master.

And she was delighted with the gentle, beautiful child who had the honor of being her godson.



Claude laughed happily. "Mother says I'm very tall and strong for my age," he said.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BLUE BOY.

From an old-world picture,
Dainty and true,
He has quietly stepped down,
This boy in blue ;
And the old-world graces
Of long ago
Still linger about him,
This boy in blue.

"THERE's a many stairs !" said little Lord Carnegie, rather breathlessly.

"Take my hand, my lord," suggested Groomer.

"People have no right to live in a top flat. It's simply abominable of them," panted the Duchess of Duncton.

Perhaps Mr. Cobalt would have resided in a less elevated flat with much pleasure had he been able to afford the larger rent that would entail, but a struggling artist cannot indulge in many luxuries even when he happens to be the *protégé* of a duchess.

A neat maid-servant ushered the breathless trio into a roomy studio which possessed the advantage of a skylight, and the artist stepped forward to meet them.

He was a tall, good-looking man with fair hair and mustache, and merry blue eyes that seemed to Carol strangely familiar.

"Can't speak at present; must—recover—breath—," panted the Duchess, sinking into an adjacent arm-chair.

Little Lord Carnegie held out his hand to the portrait painter.

"I'm the Blue Boy," he said, smiling up at him. "At least, I'm dressed in blue under this coat. It's very kind of you to paint me. I'll sit awf'ly still."

"That's right," replied Mr. Cobalt, smiling down upon the slight little figure and eager face, "and I think you will make a charming Blue Boy." He turned to the Duchess of Duncton and added in a lower tone, "A face of rare and delicate beauty. This will be congenial work."

"It will make your name and fortune," exclaimed the Duchess, who was a great enthusiast. "Your Blue Boy will throw the great master's into the shade."

The artist shrugged his broad shoulders and laughed.

"Rather a dangerous assertion, Duchess. But I will do my best with your little friend—Lord Carnegie, I think you said in your note? Yes. His father?"

"Is the Earl of Deramore."

"Lord Deramore," cried Mr. Cobalt; "indeed!" A flush dyed his handsome face. "The earl who married Celia Blissenden?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Exactly," replied the Duchess, somewhat coldly. "Lady Deramore is a charming woman and my friend."

"I—I used to know the Blissendens years ago at Malvern," the artist explained, somewhat hesitatingly. "But I was almost a boy then. They probably wouldn't remember me."

"Oh, indeed! I am not acquainted with the Blissendens. Rather—er—impossible people I fancy. But Lady Deramore is quite charming."

"Her little son bears a strong likeness to her," said Mr. Cobalt, thoughtfully. "He reminds me of what she was as a child. That blue dress is charming, Duchess. You must permit me to compliment you upon your very admirable taste."

"It was copied exactly from the boy's dress in Gainsborough's picture. I insisted upon that."

"It is perfect. And now, little Lord Carnegie, you must let me pose you. There, you can't do better than stand so. It's at once a graceful and a natural attitude."

Carol looked up into the handsome, good-humored face and smiled.

"D'you mind if I sit 'stead of standin'?" he said. "You see I've got rather a hurtin' leg an' it aches when I stand for long. It was runned over once, poor thing, an' can't help being tire-some."

There was no note of complaint in his voice, but a pathetic simplicity that marked both words and intonation touched the artist keenly. His merry eyes grew grave.

"You had certainly better sit, my dear little fellow," he answered, laying a kind hand upon the child's slender shoulder. "Come, let me lift you into this high carved chair. The dark oak will throw your blue satin into splendid relief and give an excellent effect. So! Now, what d'you say to this pose, Duchess?"

Little Lord Carnegie was a most conscientious sitter. He did not make the slightest perceptible movement until Mr. Cobalt suggested that it was time for the "rest."

Then he was not sorry to slip down from the high oak chair and stretch his small cramped person.

"Would you like to see my little people," said the artist, "my boy and girl?" And as Carol eagerly assented, he went to the door and called:

"Claude, Claude! Marjorie! Come into the studio, chicks."

A handsome sturdy boy of seven, and a tiny fair-haired maiden a year or two his junior responded quickly to their father's call.

"I want to introduce you to my Blue Boy," he said. "But first go and shake hands with the Duchess."

The Duchess did not receive the little pair encouragingly. As a rule children bored her, but Carol was very sweet and friendly. The artist's boy and girl and the little lord were soon chatting eagerly together, while at the farther end of the studio Mr. Cobalt listened good-humoredly to the Duchess's crude criticisms of his work.

"You look very tall and strong," little Lord Carnegie said to Claude Cobalt. "I wonder if you're older than me? I shall be seven next Christmas. I am a Christmas child."

"And I'm a New Year boy; my birthday is on New Year's Day. I'll be seven then."

"A month younger than me an' nearly a head taller!" Carol looked with wistful eyes upon the sturdy figure of the artist's little son.

Claude laughed happily.

"Mother says I'm very tall and strong for my age," he said.

"I would like very much to be tall an' strong," remarked the little lord, in a low tone, "but my poor leg won't let me. It got hurted when I was a baby. It's—it's rather sad feelin' for a person to be little an' weak when he wants to be brave—very brave,

you know. An' I did promise dear grandfather!" His earnest eyes filled with tears, his voice faltered.

"Poor Blue Boy!" cried tender-hearted little Marjorie; "don't ky, *please*. Claude and me will love you ever so much. We'll love you more'n if your poor leg was well, 'deed us will."

"An' Blue Boy," said Claude, "mother says weak people can be brave same as strong; *braver* sometimes. God makes them brave, mother says."

"I b'lieve Blue Boy is brave," cried Marjorie, suddenly, "him's got such brave eyes."

"Marjie's right," exclaimed her brother, "you *have* got brave eyes, Blue Boy!"

A flush of pleasure dyed little Lord Carnegie's pale face.

"I'm *so* glad you think so," he said, "so *awful* glad. You see I promised dear grandfather 'fore he went to heaven."

"Our little bruvver went to heaven," Marjorie told him; "the angels tookened him. We was very sorry. We loved him, an'—an' oh! me did want the dear little fmg to stay!" Tears sprang to her blue eyes.

"God will take care of him," Carol told her, comfortingly, "little children are very happy in heaven."

"But 'tis so far away. Right above the blue, you know," cried the little girl.

Carol's face grew thoughtful.

"It isn't far for the angels," he said, "an' they

carry the children in their arms and fly up so fast—so fast. I saw a picture once of an angel flying up to heaven with a little child in its arms. It was such a pretty picture.”

“Carol, Carol,” called the Duchess of Duncton, “come back to your chair, little one. Mr. Cobalt is ready to continue his painting.”

“Good-by, Blue Boy,” said Claude, “I hope you’ll come again soon.”

“Claude an’ me are goin’ to love you very much,” added Marjorie, quickly.

“I’m glad of that,” responded the little lord, earnestly, “an’ I shall love you, too. I hope we’ll be great friends,” he added, in his funny, grave, old-fashioned way.

The picture of the Blue Boy proceeded rapidly. Little Lord Carnegie sat for it two or three times a week, and the artist’s skill and rapid brush seemed to work magically.

Carol generally saw his little friends Claude and Marjorie when he went to Mr. Cobalt’s studio. The children grew very fond of each other; the artist’s little people found something strangely attractive in the childish personality of the Blue Boy.

Lady Deramore never went with her boy to the studio; Groomer usually accompanied him, and now and then the Duchess of Duncton would arrive in a breathless condition on the upper flat to see how the work was progressing and speak her opinions of it.

One day when Carol was sitting, Mr. Cobalt

looked up from his canvas and asked, somewhat abruptly :

"You have good news of your grandmother, Lord Carnegie? She is well?"

"Yes," said Carol, "I had a letter from her yesterday. She says she's quite well, but gettin' to feel very old. I wish she didn't feel old. I love grandmamma. I want her to stay in this world with us for a long time."

The artist did not speak, but he looked intently, eagerly, at the child, and an anxious expression stole into his merry, blue eyes.

"You see," continued Carol, "grandmamma loves her boy very much, and he's losted. I rather think she 'spects she'll find him in heaven. I think that's why she'd like to go to heaven."

The artist bent his head over his work. He was silent.

Presently he looked up and said :

"So she has spoken to you of her boy?"

"Oh, yes," said the child. "She telled me about him; I think she knew I'd be sorry. An' now I pray every day that God will send grandmamma's boy back to her."

"Lord Carnegie," exclaimed Mr. Cobalt, impressively, "if your grandmother's boy does return to her he will have all the riches that Mr. Blis-senden now intends to bestow upon you. Do you understand me?"

Carol looked up at him with grave and innocent eyes.

"That would be right," he said, "an' I should

be glad. I don't care to have many pennies, only for the almshouses. An' I think p'r'aps grandmamma's boy would make the almshouses 'stead of me if I tolded him about the poor old gentlemen."

A gleam of surprise and admiration lighted up the artist's handsome, careless face.

"You are a noble little fellow," he cried, impulsively.

"I don't know what that means," said the child, "but I want most of all things to be brave. I want it *awf'ly*."

"A good ambition. It would be well for the world if such as you lived long." The artist spoke to himself rather than to his little companion.

"I b'lieve grandmamma's boy will come back soon," said Carol, suddenly.

"Ah! why?" Mr. Cobalt started.

"I feel it in my mind," answered the old-fashioned little one. "I often feel it. An' oh, how glad I'll be, for 'twill make dear grandmamma very, *very* happy."

"She loves him still?"

"Yes, she's his mother, you see," said Carol, very simply.



"The Fair one with Golden Locks."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN FANCY DRESS.

Quaint little form of long ago,
Fresh from a canvas all aglow
With childish grace ;
Your lovely looks sweet joy must bring,
The glory of a young world's spring
Illumes your face !

With eyes of thoughtful earnestness
And mind of gentle mold.

MOULTRIE.

"MRS. BOLEROS MARCELLUS requests the pleas-
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ure of Lord Carnegie's company at a juvenile fancy-dress ball, at eight p. m., on Tuesday, November 15th."

Carol studied with much interest the very thick and highly ornamented card which contained this polite invitation. It was a most elaborate production.

The Boleros Marcelluses lived in a fine house in Palace Gardens. Mr. Boleros Marcellus was solicitor to the Duchess of Duncton, to Lord Deramore, and to Mr. Blissenden. All three were valuable clients. The aspiring heart of Mrs. Boleros Marcellus swelled with pride when Lady Deramore condescended to appear at her parties. Lady Deramore was the bright particular star of these gatherings.

There were six little Misses Boleros Marcellus, whose many accomplishments ranged from violin playing to skirt dancing. There was one son of the house, a boy some year or two Carol's senior.

It was the great desire of Mrs. Boleros Marcellus that Master Boleros Marcellus should resemble little Lord Carnegie as much as possible.

Master Boleros Marcellus, a chubby, apple-cheeked boy, quite twice the size of the little lord, was accordingly attired in garments closely copied from those worn by Lady Deramore's slender, fragile, little son. The dainty velvet and silk and lace that so well became Carol's delicate beauty made the unfortunate Master Boleros Marcellus appear nothing short of ridiculous. Carol looked

a little fairy prince. Master Boleros Marcellus was an object of ridicule, and the rude boys in the street would point at the flowing curls that hung about his big rosy face and call after him : "Get yer 'air cut, get yer 'air cut."

Little Lord Carnegie was very pleased with Mrs. Boleros Marcellus' invitation ; he had never been to a fancy dress ball. The idea of such a gathering delighted him.

He thought it would be charming to meet all the youthful heroes and heroines of ancient history, and fairy lore and nursery rhyme. How nice to dance with fair Red Riding Hood and hold polite converse with the Wolf, and Bo-Peep, and Miss Muffet, and the Fair One with Golden Locks, and the funny little Yellow Dwarf, and poor Cinderella, and quaint Hop o' My Thumb ! These and many other such delightful little personages he would meet, so his mother told him.

His only regret was that his sisters might not accompany him.

He had pleaded for them in vain.

"I *would* like Pam'la an' Irene an' Celly, an' Prim to go to the party with me," he said, wistfully.

"They are not invited," his mother told him.

"I think that isn't kind of Mrs. Boleros Marcellus," remarked Carol, "not kind at all."

Lady Deramore laughed.

"Mrs. Boleros Marcellus knows I don't care for your sisters to go to parties. By and by, they will get plenty of gaiety, Carol ; they will, when they are old enough, be presented and come

out like other girls. That time will arrive quite soon enough ; until it comes they can stay in their schoolroom."

Her tone was cold, but Carol was too much in earnest to be easily repelled.

How Prim would love to see all these children in fancy dress! How she would enjoy the pleasant party! Prim had never been to a party.

"Mother dear," he said, gently, "I've been thinking. P'r'aps Mrs. Boleros Marcellus would let Prim go 'stead of me. I'd *like* her to go ; it would make me very happy."

"A perfectly impossible suggestion, dear. Now, darling, run and ask Groomer to put on some of your prettiest things. I am going to take you to Mrs. Justin's at home. I want you to hear a little violinist, a boy scarcely older than you are, pet, who is to make his *début* there. You'll like to hear him, Carol."

Carol pleaded no more, for he knew that pleading was useless, but his earnest little face fell. He had been very eager to win this simple pleasure for his beloved Prim.

From the Duchess of Duncton came the suggestion that her little godson should appear at the fancy-dress ball in his "Blue Boy" dress.

"He couldn't look sweeter in anything," she said.

And so little Lord Carnegie went to Mrs. Boleros Marcellus' ball as the Blue Boy from Gainsborough's famous picture.

Through the handsome reception-rooms of the big house in Palace Gardens streamed on the evening of the 15th quite two hundred little people in fancy dress.

The Duchess of Duncton brought little Lord Carnegie and imparted the luster of her august presence to the entertainment. Mrs. Boleros Marcellus sprang forward to meet her with a swelling heart.

"And, oh, what a pet of a Blue Boy!" she cried, effusively embracing Carol who longed to extricate himself from her caressing arms and was far too polite to do so. "What a perfect darling!"

Little Lord Carnegie, standing beside the big Duchess, looked about him with grave, inquiring eyes. He was greatly interested in this new and brilliant scene. The gay dresses, the lights, the flowers, the music, filled his simple mind with wonderment.

There were many Bo-Peeps and Red Riding Hoods, and at least a score of pretty Dresden Shepherdesses. Prince Charming waltzed with Joan of Arc, and Jack Horner pulled crackers with Mary Quite Contrary and Little Miss Muffet. Swiss and Italian peasants flitted about picturesquely, and tambourine girls clashed their noisy toys. A handsome, slim young toreador took care of a demure little Sister of Charity, whose round baby face and blue eyes contrasted curiously with her somber dress. A diminutive negro thrummed on his big banjo and tried to

make pretty speeches to a graceful, lovely Snow Queen, a head and shoulders above him.

Pretty faces, children's voices, merry laughter, bright lighting, and lovely flowers and swelling music! A veritable fairyland! A world of diminutive men and women! The society of the future; midget editions of older and wiser folks!

Take it as you will, it was a charming scene.

The Blue Boy did not dance. Such exercise would hurt that "poor leg," of the existence of which he was often painfully reminded—more often than those about him ever guessed.

"I'd like to sit and watch," he said.

And so, while the other children danced and romped, the slight little figure in blue sat apart.

The Duchess presently hurried to him, ready to depart.

"Come my dear, we must be going," she said; "you look dreadfully tired. I'm not sure you should have come."

She bore him off forthwith. They were soon in her snug brougham spinning along homewards to Lord Deramore's house in Park Lane.

"Did you enjoy the ball, child?"

"Yes," he answered, "I liked it very much. It was very pretty, an' the children had such happy faces."

He smiled up at her brightly, but there was a tired look in his eyes that made her uneasy.

Lord and Lady Deramore were out of town for a couple of days, visiting friends at Brighton.

The Duchess descended from her brougham, and went into the house in Park Lane for the special purpose of seeing her little godson safely into the hands of his personal attendant.

"His lordship is very tired," she said to this individual, "put him to bed at once."

Groomer did not love the Duchess, nor her dictating manner. She received the command in dignified silence and carried off her charge almost before the great lady had left the house.

It was twelve o'clock and Carol was very tired. He made no objection when Groomer lifted his slight little figure in her strong arms and bore him upstairs as though he had been a baby. He only said :

"Don't tire yourself."

He was never too weary to think of others.

Rosette was in the nursery. She sprang up to greet her little master, and when Groomer set him down in a big armchair by the fire she jumped at him and licked his hands, uttering short yaps of joy. Rosette was devoted to Carol.

Groomer gave her little lord some beef-tea. He protested against this, but allowed himself to be persuaded. It was a relief to her to see the faint color creep back into his pale face.

"You've not got the strength for going to these big late parties," she said, "an' I don't hold with them, nohow. But there, her grace knows as much about children as a cat knows o' goldfish, rather less if the cat's a poacher." And Groomer sniffed disdainfully.

"I don't pretend to be fond of the Duchess of Duncton," she added, frankly.

"She's very kind," remarked Carol, gently.

"Kind indeed! We'll have her killing you with kindness soon, I should say," retorted the indignant handmaiden. She stirred the beef-tea vigorously.

"Jane," said Carol, suddenly, "I want you to let me go an' say good-night to Prim 'fore I go to bed. I was gived some little presents off the Christmas-tree an' I broughted them home for her. There's a pretty drum full of chocolates an' a note-book painted with flowers. Prim will like them, I think. You'll let me go, won't you, Jane?"

Groomer looked perturbed.

"But it's very late, my lord, past midnight. The young ladies went to bed hours ago," she objected.

"I'll be very quiet. I'll not 'sturb Prim. 'Deed I won't. I'll only just poke the little presents under her pillow, you see."

"Can't I do that for you?" suggested Groomer, in a persuasive tone.

But Carol shook his curly head.

"I'd like to do it my own self," he said, "I may, mayn't I?" He slipped down from his chair.

An expression of consternation passed over Groomer's face. She spoke hurriedly.

"The fact is, my lord—well, the fact is you can't see Lady Primrose. She's out."

Carol looked at her apprehensively. Her manner frightened him.

"Is my sister ill?" he asked, quickly. A nervous flush dyed his pretty little face.

"No, not ill as I know of," answered Groomer, hastily. "She—she—well, my lord, I didn't mean to tell you to-night, I didn't want to upset you, but, if you must know, Lady Primrose is lost."

"Lost! Prim lost! I don't understand. Tell me all about it, Jane; tell me very quick, please. I will go and look for her directly. I know I can find her." The child hurried to the door.

"Come back and listen to me for a bit, my lord. Don't take on, there's a dear, good little gentleman."

Groomer followed him and with gentle force brought him back to the fireside. She sat down on the chair he had vacated and lifted him on to her lap.

"Just stay quiet, dearie," she said, persuasively, "and I'll tell you all about it, all I know. You can't do no good searchin' for your sister, a little gentleman like you."

"But poor Prim's losted. I must go and look for poor Prim," persisted the child, with dilating eyes and quivering lips.

"Don't take on so, my lord," pleaded Groomer, "You really mustn't, you'll make yourself ill."

"Tell me about Prim," he said, "tell me quick."

"My lord and lady being away at Brighton, Miss Dobson thinks she'll go for a little airing," Groomer began, "so she, without a word to any-one, goes off to the circus with the little ladies—to the evenin' performance of all things."

"What's a circus?" interrupted Carol.

"Performin' elephants an' lions, likewise horses and dogs. Ladies and gentlemen dressed up very smart an' ridin' beautiful."

"Wouldn't the lions eat peoples that went to see them?" questioned the child, with anxious eyes.

"Oh, no. They're educated lions, you see. They behave quite pretty."

"Please tell me the rest, the rest about poor Prim bein' losted, Jane?"

"Very well then, my lord. But don't you look so scared and pale; they'll find your sister safe enough. Well, at eleven o'clock home comes Miss Dobson an' the little ladies, all in a fine state of mind, and without Lady Primrose. It seems they'd lost sight of her as they come out o' the circus an' couldn't find her nohow. Miss Dobson was in hysterics, she was, an' a pretty fuss she——"

"What's 'sterics, Jane?"

"Hysterics, my lord? Well, a foolish exhibition o' female weakness, I calls it. But there, I never thought much o' that Miss Dobson. She's a poor creature.

"Giles went down to the p'lice station," continued Groomer, "and institooted a search, an' he called at the circus an' made inquiries. But as

yet there's no news o' the little lost lady. However, you mustn't take on, my lord; there isn't no need. You go to bed quiet and good to-night, and to-morrow when you wake you'll find Lady Prim come home to you safe an' sound. There, you mark my words."

Groomer was aggressively cheerful. Her little lord's pale and anxious face frightened her. She was eager to quiet his misgivings.

"You go to sleep, and morning an' Lady Primrose will come all the sooner," she said.

But Carol would not be so easily consoled.

"Jane," he cried, "Jane, *do* let me go. I must go and look for Prim; I really *must*. I would call, an' I know she'd hear my voice anywhere, 'cos she loves me. I'd be sure to find her."

"My lord," said Groomer, with a sudden happy inspiration, "it isn't right for you to go. Your mamma would not wish it. Her ladyship would be terribly upset if she knew you were out in the fog of a November night. You'd not wish to disobey my lady's wishes?"

Her argument prevailed. With quivering lips and plaintive eyes, full of tears, little Carol abandoned his purpose. Silently he submitted to being undressed and lifted into his bed.

Only once he said in a very low voice, "It's a very dark night, an' poor Prim's frightened of the dark."

And almost immediately he added, a brighter look on his tired face, "But I think God will take care o' her."

To his simple prayers he appended a petition :

“ Dear Father in heaven, please keep my sister safe an’ bring her back to me soon, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

It seemed that he found comfort in these words, for scarcely had his curly head touched the pillow than his wearied eyelids closed and he fell asleep.

But there were tears upon his cheek when presently Groomer bent anxiously over him. He stirred uneasily in his sleep and murmured “ Prim.” It was evident that he was dreaming of his little lost sister.

The trouble of Prim’s loss seemed to fill all his childish mind. There was no room left for bright recollections of a scene of gaiety and merriment. The flowers, the music, the brilliant lights, the pretty young faces, had already faded from the memory of this one little guest. Thinking of Primrose he quite forgot all the simple pleasure he had felt as he sat apart from the other children, a fragile, delicate little Blue Boy, and looked with wondering eyes upon the enchanted fairyland scene of his first ball.

He awoke with dawn—the faint, slow, gray dawn of a November morning.

A stream of pale light poured in between the window curtains. The cuckoo in the Swiss clock upon the stairs was proclaiming to the awakening world that it was seven o’clock.

He sat up in bed and listened to the blithe, quick call.

"It's mornin'," he said, "mornin', an' I must go an' look for Prim."

He sprang from his little bed and began to dress himself in the smart sportsman-like riding dress which he preferred to velvet and laces. He dressed very quickly; he had been accustomed to wait upon himself in those far-away days when he had been just a simple country boy living at Cloverlea Rectory. The last button of his high leggings was fastened. He took his peaked cap in his hand and crept from the room. Noiselessly he closed the doors that Rosette might not follow him, then he ran lightly along the corridors and down the stairs. The hall doors stood widely opened; there were no servants about. The child went quickly out into the chill, gray November morning.

Groomer making a toilette leisurely in the room adjoining his had no suspicion of the departure of her little charge. She supposed that he was still sleeping quietly.

There was no one to tell the little one that Primrose was safe and sound in her little room in the house he was leaving, and that his search was not needed.

Lost Prim had fallen into good hands. A benevolent old lady, leaving the circus with a group of merry grandchildren about her, had taken kindly possession of the poor little weeping girl. She had borne her away to her house in Grosvenor Place, there to share a delightful supper prepared for the fortunate grandchildren,

and when that was over, and Prim's tears were quite a thing of the past, she had put her into a cab and sent her home in the care of her maid. So very soon after little Carol fell asleep Primrose had been brought back none the worse for her fright, and Miss Dobson, glad and thankful to see the child safe and well, had quite forgotten to scold.

But of this Carol knew nothing.

He was going to seek Prim, his dear Prim, who was "losted." It wasn't naughty to start on his search now. The night was past and the long day lay before him. He would look high and low. He was quite sure he would find her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GRANNY'S BOY.

O little souls as pure and white,
And crystalline as rays of light,
Direct from heaven their source divine.

LONGFELLOW.

And who feels discord now, or sorrows ;
Love is the universe to-day.

SHELLEY.

It had been a terrible day to Lady Deramore. She returned from Brighton, summoned by telegram, to hear that her dearly-loved little son had disappeared.

Groomer was quite certain he had gone to search for his sister, but Lady Deramore was convinced that he had again been stolen by her old enemy, Rhoda Grange. Lady Deramore remembered but too well the woman who had robbed her of her child for so many long years. She was almost distracted.

Lord Deramore, an eminently careless person possessed of a boundless store of cheap philosophy, took the case less emotionally. He was sure that "the little chap would turn up somehow." Perhaps he was more disturbed than he appeared to

be. Lady Deramore told him he was heartless. He shrugged his wide shoulders and departed to the safe refuge of his club. He had set the police to work and had started all possible inquiries as to the missing child. He could do no more. He took his dinner, and afterwards looked in at the Gaiety to divert his thoughts.

Mr. Blissenden arrived at his son-in-law's house in Park Lane about midday. He was furious with everybody. He said there had been grave neglect of duty. He said he blamed his daughter for going away to Brighton and leaving her little son in the care of servants. His anxiety made him ill-tempered, noisy, and blustering.

Mr. Blissenden was not an agreeable addition to the household. He stormed at Groomer until she was fairly bewildered, reduced Miss Dobson to hysterics, and terrified his granddaughters. He rushed restlessly in and out of the house, he bothered the police, he got into everybody's way. His presence accentuated the general discomfort.

To Lady Deramore this day seemed endless—this long, long day of anxiety and fear.

Made almost frantic by her father's angry blustering, she locked herself in her own room and paced its length with restless feet. She, the spoiled woman of the world, was like some passionate, undisciplined child in her indignation and grief.

The shadows lengthened and evening came at last—the dull, gray, chill November evening. Poor Prim, crouched in a corner of the school-

room window, watched with tearful eyes the black mantle of night that crept up slowly over the great city. Oh! where was her little brother? He was so young and so delicate and fragile. It could not be that he was out alone in the big, dark world.

But if so, was he afraid? The child thought not.

"He's never frightened of the dark," she mused: "he always says that he knows our Father in heaven is takin' care of him."

She looked up at the sky, in which the stars were beginning to come out, and wondered did our Father really watch over and care for his little children. Could it be possible that the great God, to whom belong both heaven and earth, might bend a pitying eye on the little ones?

Lady Deramore shuddered as the twilight deepened into darkness. She thought of her darling exposed to the inclemency of the chill autumn night, and her heart grew faint with fear. Her very helplessness to aid him made her frantic.

Dinner was served, and Mr. Blissenden partook of it alone. He sprang to his feet at every other moment, ran to the window and looked out; he consulted the clock at intervals of half a second; he compared his watch with it. He anathematized everybody and everything in no mild terms.

Silver Buttons trembled before him. Silver Buttons was thankful when the ordeal came to an end.

"A poor fellow might as well have to wait on

a ragin' lion at once, that he might," he confided feelingly to the sympathetic Groomer.

At about nine o'clock the Duchess of Duncton arrived upon the scene. She had just heard the report of her little godson's disappearance.

She marched into the drawing-room without giving the butler time to announce her.

Mr. Blissenden, all his hair on end, his thumbs stuck in the armholes of his terribly checked waistcoat, stood upon the hearth-rug scowling. The Duchess was a stranger to him except by name. He rushed to greet her like a lion ready for his prey. He seized her by both hands and fairly dragged her into the room.

"You are one of the detective force. You have brought news of Lord Carnegie. Speak, speak!" he gasped.

The Duchess, red and indignant, extricated herself with difficulty.

"No, sir, I am not one of the detective force," she said, in an awful voice. "I'm the Duchess of Duncton. And where, pray, is my godson?"

"He's lost," moaned Mr. Blissenden. "Lost, I tell you, by a set of doddering idiots."

"I know he's lost," replied the Duchess, sharply. "What I want to know is, why he is not found?"

The old soap-boiler ran his fingers through his hair till he looked like Shock-Headed Peter in the children's funny picture book.

"Upon my word of honor, I can't tell you," he said.

The Duchess looked indignant.

"This is absurd," she exclaimed. "What can you all have been thinking about? Well, he shall be found now. I will see to that. I shall go to the police station at once and give those incapable people there a piece of my mind."

She swept from the room with the air of one who goes to put the world in order, and Mr. Blissenenden, with a sudden recollection of the manners and customs of polite society, rang the bell for Silver Buttons to attend her to her carriage.

The Duchess had scarcely left the house in Park Lane when Lady Deramore's maid knocked briskly upon her lady's door.

Her knock, though oft repeated, met with no response.

"My lady," said Bangs, in a slightly raised voice, "it's a note. We think as it may bring news of his little lordship."

The door seemed to fly open. Lady Deramore snatched the envelope from the salver. Her hands trembled terribly, her eyes refused to read the message. She handed the paper to her maid.

"Be quick. Read it quickly," she said, feverishly.

Bangs did not need the admonition.

The message was a brief one:—

"Little Lord Carnegie safe with us."

It was from Cobalt, 3 B — Mansions, South Kensington. Lady Deramore recognized the name of the painter.

"Get my cloak. I must go to the child at

once," she said. "Oh I am so thankful, so thankful!"

The sudden reaction was almost too much for her. She looked as though she were going to faint.

But she didn't faint. She went to her boy.

Lady Deramore, closely followed by Mr. Blisenden, ascended the many stairs that led to the lofty flat occupied by Mr. Cobalt. The artist's wife met them in the corridor. She was a pretty little woman with a sweet face and sympathetic eyes.

"Your boy is quite safe," she said, reassuringly, to Lady Deramore. "He has recovered from the swoon and is asking for you, and especially for his sister. It seems he fancies she is lost. He is evidently very anxious about her."

"She has been found," answered Lady Deramore, shortly; and then in a more gracious tone she added, "I am so very much obliged to you, Mrs. Cobalt. I really can't tell you how much obliged. I have been in a terrible state about my child."

"I can quite understand that," was the gentle reply. "We let you know directly we could. The telegraph offices, were, of course, closed, so we couldn't avail ourselves of them, but my husband sent a special messenger."

"Did Carol come to you? I don't quite understand."

"Oh, no. My husband had been dining with

a friend who lives close by here. When he was leaving the house he found little Lord Carnegie lying on the doorstep. We suppose the poor child, worn out from long wanderings, was overcome by fatigue and cold."

"Horrible!" cried Lady Deramore, with a shudder.

Here Mr. Blissenden interposed.

"My dear madam," he said, impressively, "you are doubtless unaware that your husband is entitled to the magnificent reward of one thousand pounds, but such is the case. One thousand pounds, madam! That is what I have offered to the finder of my grandson, Lord Carnegie."

Mr. Blissenden was very grand. His voice swelled with importance.

The sweet, thoughtful face of the artist's little wife flushed sensitively.

"We do not wish for any reward," she said, quickly, "my husband is only thankful that he found the child."

Lady Deramore turned to her with one of her sudden better impulses.

"Oh I know that," she cried, clasping her hand, "and we owe you a never-to-be-paid debt of gratitude for saving my darling's life."

"Let us go to him," said Mrs. Cobalt. She led the way into an artistically furnished sitting-room behind the studio.

Carol, wrapped in shawls, lay upon a big sofa near the fire. A hectic pink flushed his pale little face, his beautiful hazel eyes were large and

brilliant. He held out his arms to his mother; she ran to him and fell upon her knees beside him and put her arms about his slight figure, kissing him and calling him by every tender and endearing name.

"Is Prim founded?"

That was his first inquiry. It stirred a feeling of angry jealousy in his mother's breast. Always Prim! Surely he loved his sister best.

"Yes," she answered, shortly, "she's safe at home." And then she cried, "O my darling! why did you leave us? You have made me so wretched, so terribly anxious."

"I went to look for Prim," he answered, "but it was a long way an' my poor leg got very tired. After my star came out I went to sleep, an' I waked up here. I'm sorry you was frightened, mother dear." He stroked her face with a caressing little hand.

And then he turned to speak to Mr. Blissenden, who was bending over him with tears in his sharp old eyes and calling him tenderly his dear boy, his own dear boy in a voice that was strangely broken and faltering.

Those three—Carol and his mother and the old soap-boiler—could think of nothing but each other for the next few moments. But presently Carol said:

"Grandpapa, please thank Mr. Cobalt. He founded me an' brought me here, you know. He's been very kind."

The artist and his wife had moved away to

the further end of the room. The artist's head was averted, but to see Mr. Blissenden seemed to be something strange. Behind a tall, broad-shouldered figure.

"Mr. Cobalt," he said, "I'm glad."

The artist turned to him.

"Alex!" cried the old man.

"You are not pleased to see me, then?" said the artist. "You would not have seen me if I had not come to my house. You need not call my troubling you. You may go away and forget me, I shall never forget this day."

He spoke quietly, but his face was very pale.

Lady Derwinton spring forward and took his hand.

"Dear Alex!" she exclaimed. "I have to thank you for saving my child's life. Let us forget the past and be friends. Father, you wish this?"

She turned quickly to Mr. Blissenden.

He met her eyes with a sullen look.

"I ain't one to change my mind," he said, stubbornly. "Mr. Cobalt, as he calls himself, has now a good reward of money. Let him take it. My son Alex I've counted dead for many a year. The dead don't come to life in this world."

But little Carol pushed aside the shawls that enfolded him and ran into the midst of the group, a slight small figure in a torn and mud-bespattered riding suit. The soft lamplight fell full upon his sweet, flushed face and earnest eyes. His childish voice rang out clear and shrill on the silence.

"Alex isn't dead, grandpapa," he said, "he's only losted. Granny told me so. She hopes he'll come back to her one day. She wants him awf'ly. You see, she's growin' old, an' he's her boy, an' she loves him."

"Here is granny's boy, Carol," said Lady Deramore, laying her hand upon her brother's arm.

The child turned eagerly to the artist.

"Oh I'm very glad—very, very glad," he cried. "Granny will be so happy, I know."

An awkward silence followed this innocent speech.

"What is the good of prolonging this interview?" impatiently whispered the artist to his sister.

Carol looked from one to the other of these grave grown-up people and wondered what was wrong. Why were they not happy and glad that granny's boy was found? He could not understand them.

"It's time we were going, Celia," said Mr. Blissenden, sharply. "Come, bring the child." He turned towards the door.

"Isn't granny's boy comin', too?" asked Carol.

His mother stooped and whispered to him.

"No, grandpapa's angry with him; he doesn't want him. Come away, darling, we can do no more. Grandpapa is frightfully determined, no one can persuade him."

The child ran after the old man, who had gone

out on to the landing. He caught his hands and detained him.

"Dear grandpapa," he said, with great earnestness, "please forgive granny's boy, please do." His simple, direct words and sweet, pleading face moved Mr. Blissenden as nothing else might have.

Perhaps the old soap-boiler was glad to be thus persuaded, thankful to be furnished with an excuse for relenting. Perchance he even longed to take back into favor the son whom he had cast off in a moment of disappointment and temper. Alexis was his only son, and he had loved him and had felt proud of him. It is likely that the stubborn old man had grieved for the son from whom he had been estranged for many years, that he had fretted at the barrier which his own hands had piled up.

This might or might not have been. One fact remained, an important fact. He could refuse his grandson nothing. This little frail, delicate boy with the thoughtful face and the gentle, old-fashioned ways was as the child of his old age. He loved to please Carol and humor him; for him he daily made many concessions.

And now he could not turn deaf ears upon the sweet, childish voice that pleaded forgiveness for "granny's boy." He could not shake off the little hands that strove to detain him.

The old man put his arm about the child's slight shoulders, and so turned to meet his son. His voice was husky and faltering. There was a new, a softer, expression upon his rugged face.

"Alex," he said, "for this little lad's sake, and—and I'm getting an old man, lad, an' your mother wants you."

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They were in a cab on their way to the house in Park Lane, Lady Deramore and her father and the little child who was so precious to them both.

Carol sat on his grandfather's knee, his curly head resting upon the old man's shoulder. In the darkness they could not see how pale and wan his little face had grown. His cheerful, uncomplaining voice reassured them. They had no fears for him; they could only feel thankful and glad that he was safely restored to them.

Presently he grew very quiet, and they thought he must have fallen asleep. But when Lady Deramore stooped to look into his face she saw that he was watching the stars with grave and earnest eyes—those brilliant, beautiful stars that shone steadily in the clear sapphire far above the lights of London.

"Of what are you thinking, my darling?" she asked, taking the little hand in hers.

A happy smile flickered over his baby face.

"I was thinkin' about my star, about my own dear star, you know, mother dear," he said. "It's shinin' very bright to-night. I'm sure it's glad 'cos granny's boy is founded. Don't you think so?"

"Perhaps, dear."

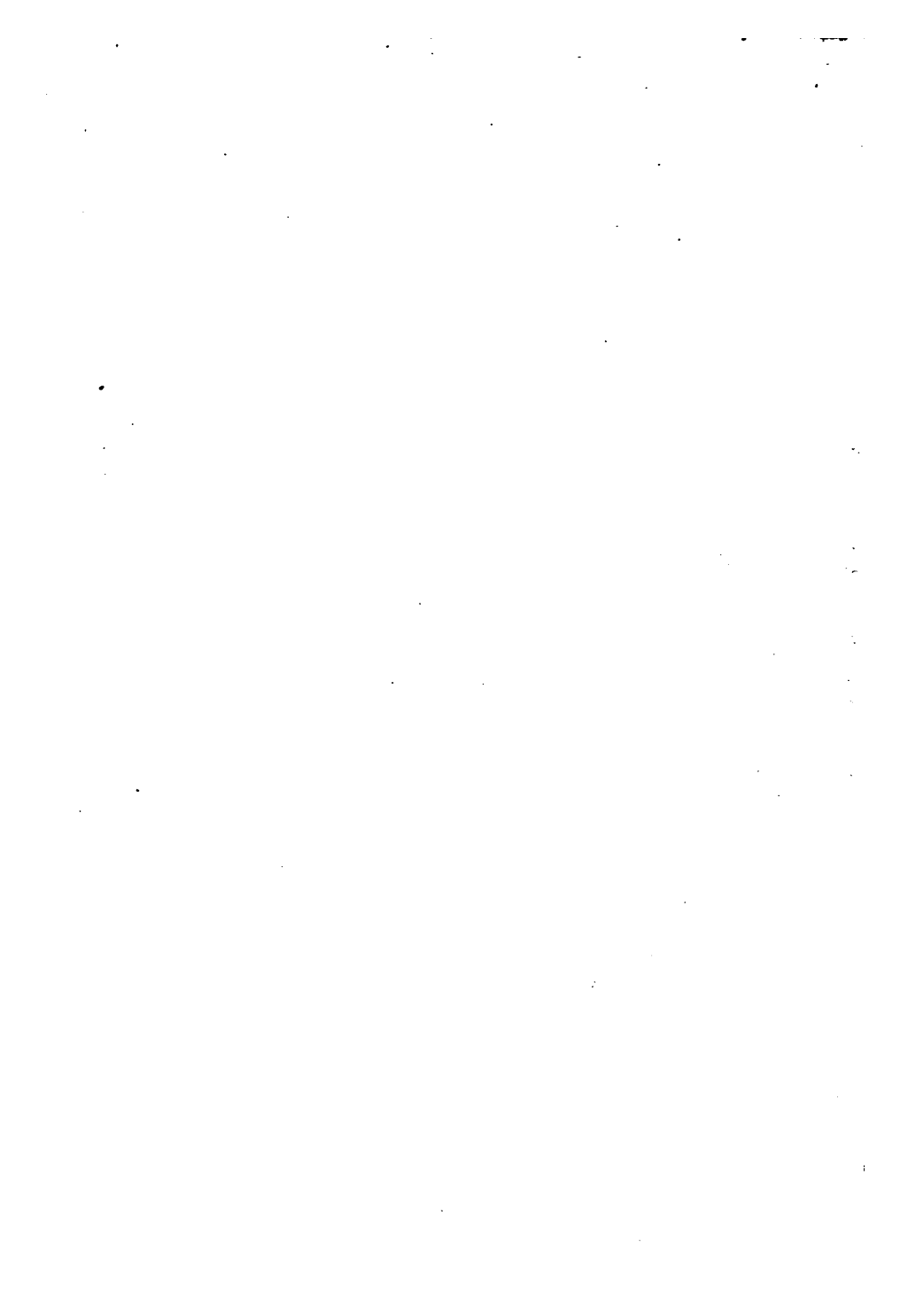
"And," he added, softly, "God is glad, too."

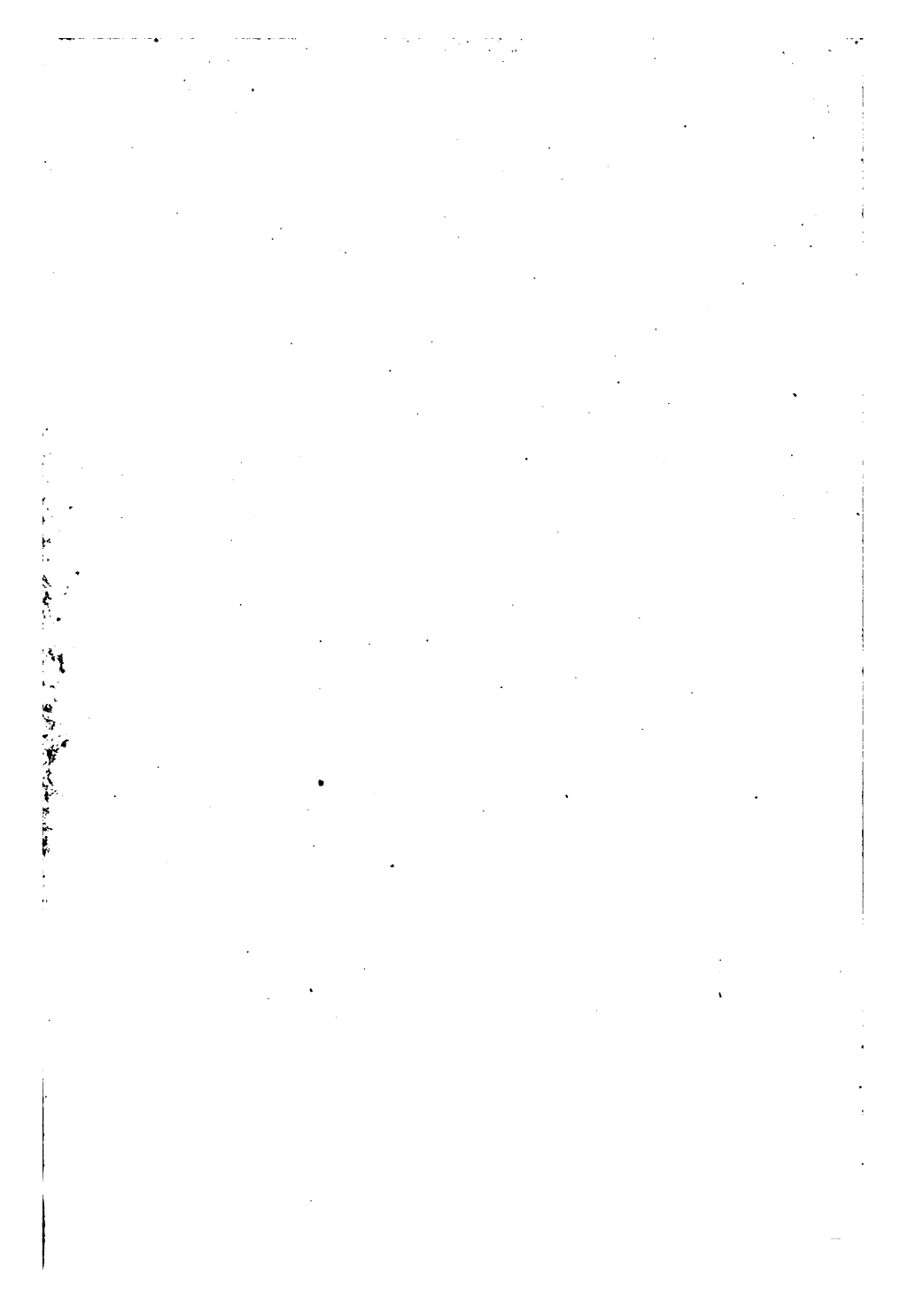
God is always glad when peoples forgive one another."

His voice was very low, he seemed to be speaking more to himself than to his companions.

Love, peace, goodwill. These formed the blessed message of the first Christmas Child.

Love, peace, goodwill. The blessed message was breathed again in the simple life of a little one who strove to follow in his steps.





**This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building**

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